

# **Using Writing-to-Learn Activities in the Foreign Language Classroom**

**Torild Homstad &  
Helga Thorson**

*A research grant report submitted to the Center for  
Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing*

**Technical Report Series  
No. 14 ♦ 1996**

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## **Preface**

Foreign language instructors, believing that writing in a foreign language may prove too frustrating and difficult for students, have often been reluctant to incorporate writing-to-learn activities into their pedagogy. Torild Homstad and Helga Thorson examine this supposition through surveys of teachers and students in German and Scandinavian language classes at the University of Minnesota. Their department has been a model for others as they have conducted extensive training seminars for faculty and teaching assistants, including workshops focusing specifically on writing activities for students writing in a new language. The authors specifically believe that extensive writing assignments such as weekly dialog journals and e-mail exchanges strengthen writing skills and may also enhance critical thinking and cultural interaction. The quantitative results are somewhat inconclusive because of methodological problems (which will be instructive to others designing similar studies), but qualitative observations indicate that their curricular enhancements are achieving their goals.

Research such as this, together with ongoing Center projects, should result in improved undergraduate writing, the Center's primary goal. Along with colloquia, conferences, publications, and other outreach activities, the Center annually funds research projects by University of Minnesota faculty who study any of the following topics:

- characteristics of writing across the University's curriculum;
- status reports on students' writing ability and the University;
- the connections between writing and learning in all fields;
- the characteristics of writing beyond the academy;

- the effects of ethnicity, race, class, and gender on writing; and
- curricular reform through writing-intensive instruction.

We are pleased to present this technical report as part of the ongoing discussion about writing-to-learn in the classroom. One of the goals of all Center publications is to encourage conversations about writing; we invite you to contact the Center about this publication or other Center publications and activities.

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Series Editor  
Holly Littlefield, Editor  
June 1996

## **Part One**

### **Using Intensive Writing-to-Learn Activities in the Foreign Language Classroom:**

#### **Project Summary**

##### **Introduction**

This report summarizes our project concerning writing in the second language classroom, and the ways in which writing promotes the development of language proficiency. In recent years there has been much research in English Composition Studies and in English as a Second Language on issues of teaching writing in the classroom. These studies have focused on the process of writing itself—mainly examining whether writing is predominantly a linear or a recursive process. Other studies have examined the relationship between writing and cognition and have shown that writing is often a tool for learning. Writing to learn is just as important as learning to write, and this writing/learning relationship exists in all fields, not just in composition courses. The move towards “Writing Across the Curriculum” (WAC) at many colleges and universities has originated from this branch of research.

Research in English as a Second Language, second language acquisition, and foreign languages has started to analyze the relationship between writing in a second language and writing in one’s native language. Researchers in these fields have just begun to scratch the surface in answering the following questions: Do students who write well in their native language also tend to be good writers in a second language? How does proficiency in writing relate to overall second language proficiency? In what ways does writing interact with other language skills such as reading, listening, or speaking? Do avid second language readers tend to be better writers? What is the best way of

teaching writing in the classroom? What constitutes a good writing task? Do different assessment techniques play a role in improving writing? What criteria should be used to evaluate writing?

Although we can learn much from the research that has been done in Composition Studies and English as a Second Language, we also perceive the discipline of foreign language instruction as having a unique history. Very little research has so far been conducted on the aspects and issues specific to writing in the foreign language. Much more research needs to be done on the relationship between writing in the foreign language and writing in the native language, the complex interaction between foreign language writing and other language modalities (listening, reading, speaking, cultural interaction), how different types of writing (writing-to-learn activities, formal vs. informal writing, extensive vs. intensive writing, the use of different discourse modes such as descriptive vs. expository writing) can build overall language proficiency, and the extent to which cultural variables play a role in a student's approach to writing and discourse.

We may roughly divide the history of second language pedagogy into three major approaches: grammar-translation, audio-lingual, and communicative. Each places a different emphasis on writing. The grammar-translation method—the most traditional approach to language teaching—contains a surprisingly strong emphasis on writing. But, unlike current approaches, which concentrate on the production of new meaning, writing in a grammar-translation approach focuses on transcription of an already existing text. Indeed, just an examination of the term grammar-translation indicates that the second



language being acquired is actually “the language of grammar,” not one used by one individual to communicate with another.

In the audio-lingual approach to second language instruction the emphasis is, as might be assumed from its name, on listening and speaking. This approach first gained prominence in the late 1940s, and has been dominant in the second language curriculum until recently. The audio-lingual method concentrates on spoken dialogs and rote drills, primarily oral, in which students mimic and manipulate the language they hear in the dialogs. Writing is used primarily as an aid to memorization of supplied speech patterns.

In recent years second language pedagogy has shifted towards a communicative or proficiency-oriented approach. This approach maintains that it is important for students to build proficiency in all of the four language modalities (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). Yet, in practice, the emphasis is often placed on oral proficiency. Thus, speaking and listening skills are privileged, and writing is frequently used primarily to support the development of oral proficiency.

Until recently, writing has been seen as the “step-child” of the four modalities within all the major approaches to foreign language acquisition. Only the most advanced classes typically involved composition in the target language, and traditionally these composition classes were often little more than workshops in grammar. Foreign language teachers have rarely focused on improving composition skills such as structuring discourse, organizing thoughts, choosing appropriate vocabulary and style in writing, or concentrating on various discourse modes (narration, argumentation, description, and exposition), and tailoring the writing for specific audiences.

Why have foreign language teachers been reluctant to use writing activities in the classroom or to integrate writing into the curriculum? Many instructors believe that students of a foreign language have such a limited vocabulary in the second language that writing is not only a difficult but also an extremely frustrating experience. Another objection to assigning writing in foreign language classes is that students often repeat the same errors in their writing. Consequently, these assignments could lead to the fossilization of certain errors. Another familiar complaint is that student-writing assignments are burdensome for the teacher who must eventually correct the work.

We believe, however, that the benefits of writing in the foreign language classroom outweigh these concerns. Both extensive writing—having students produce a significant quantity of work—and intensive writing—asking students to focus on and revise one small piece of writing for clarity—will help increase overall language proficiency and can be used to complement and support other language skills as well. For example, students can use writing-to-learn activities such as freewrites, word associations, and brainstorming as pre-speaking or post-reading activities. Furthermore, writing activities such as these can be used at all language levels. Extensive writing assignments such as weekly dialog journals or e-mail exchanges not only enhance writing skills, but may also expand critical thinking skills and foster cultural interaction.

Our experience indicates that our curriculum and classroom practices still often lag behind even the basic knowledge we have concerning development of foreign language literacy. New curricula, new textbooks (in many cases), and teacher training will be important factors in the successful implementation of process writing and writing-to-learn activities for the development of second language proficiency.

## Project Overview

In spring 1993 we received a grant from the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing to examine the use of writing activities in the foreign language classroom. Our experiences had led us to an interest in the potential for using writing-to-learn in the foreign language classroom. In our own classes we had experimented with a variety of writing strategies such as freewrites, process writing, creative writing and peer editing. The German program had begun to implement process-writing approaches in the second quarter through the sixth quarter of language instruction. Our experiences seemed to indicate that, if applied widely and consistently throughout the curricula, writing should have a significant positive effect on student learning.

Our project was concerned with both theoretical and practical aspects of writing in the foreign languages. This included researching and presenting to our departments previous research on Writing Across the Curriculum and second language acquisition, promoting and monitoring the use of writing in our classes, and evaluating the efficiency of intensive writing in the classroom relative to its effectiveness in developing foreign language proficiency.

We began our project by creating an annotated bibliography on second language writing, which provides an overview of some of the major ideas and resources concerning the role of writing in the second language classroom. It contains 45 entries, including both “hands-on” material directly applicable to the language classroom and articles, which trace the historical and theoretical development of writing pedagogy in second language education. This bibliography, *Writing Theory and Practice in the Second Language Classroom: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*, was published by the Center

for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing in its Technical Report Series (Technical Report No. 10, 1994).

One of our initial goals was to examine the results of the graduation proficiency exams in German and Scandinavian to see if intensive writing activities improved the over-all proficiency results. We found it impossible to do a systematic analysis of the graduation proficiency exams, as there were too many variables to isolate the effects of intensive writing. Although we cannot quantify our findings, our perception is that student performance in the writing portion of the Norwegian proficiency exam in 1994 and 1995—after implementation of writing-to-learn activities in these classes—indicates an increasing fluency and confidence from previous years. Students wrote in greater quantity, with greater fluency and more originality, when asked to perform tasks such as writing a story about a picture or sending a postcard while on vacation, than is indicated from previous exams.

During the fall 1993 orientation session for foreign language teaching assistants (graduate teaching assistants are the primary language instructors for beginning and intermediate courses at the University of Minnesota), we introduced our project with a three-hour workshop. Prior to the workshop we distributed a packet of readings relevant to second language writing to each language instructor (see Appendix A). At the beginning of the workshop we conducted a teacher attitude survey on writing (see Appendix B). Lillian Bridwell-Bowles and Michael Kuhne from the Center for the Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing led this introductory workshop. Professor Bridwell-Bowles discussed different approaches to writing-to-learn, and components and uses of

process writing. Language instructors worked together in small groups to create writing activities.

Throughout the year we asked language teachers to use at least three writing activities each week, and to provide us with a description of these activities in a “language teacher’s feedback” survey form (see Appendix D). These were compiled, along with other writing activities, in 3-ring binders for each T. A. office. We also encouraged discussion in regular language teachers’ meetings about the use of writing activities in the classroom.

At the end of Fall Quarter we conducted a student survey in all language classrooms in German and Scandinavian (see Appendix E). This survey attempted to measure student perceptions of the type and variety of writing activities used in their language classes and their effect on student learning.

A final workshop was held during Spring Quarter 1995 to discuss specific issues, which had arisen in the course of our project. This workshop was conducted by Professor Diane Tedick from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota. In this workshop participants discussed the differences between L1 and L2 writing, the frustrations encountered with the process approach to writing in the foreign languages, and assessment techniques. In addition, small groups designed writing activities and discussed assessment issues.

We collected a massive amount of material during our work on this project. Since it was impossible to analyze all of the information we collected, we decided to focus on the two components of our study, which we found particularly interesting: the Writing Project Attitude Survey for teachers and the Student Survey.

## Writing Project Attitude Survey

### 1. Teacher Survey

At the fall 1993 workshop we distributed a survey on writing attitudes to all participants. Our original intention was to conduct the same survey at the end of the project and compare any changes in attitudes towards writing on the part of language teachers. Thirty-four language instructors completed the survey, but many of them did so anonymously, and it was therefore not possible to conduct a valid post-project survey. We have tabulated the results of the initial Attitude Survey (see Appendix C), but for the purposes of this report we wish to discuss only those responses that pertain most directly to issues of second language teaching. We adapted the format of our teacher survey and some of the questions from Toby Fulwiler, Michael, and Margaret Gorman in “Changing Faculty Attitudes Toward Writing,” in *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice*, edited by Art Young and Toby Fulwiler.

Three questions addressed writing as a modality. More than half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Writing is the least important of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) for students of a second language.” Approximately 20%, however, de-privileged writing in relation to the other modalities. Twelve respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “Second language instruction should emphasize speaking above all other modalities.” Eighteen respondents disagreed or strongly disagree with this statement, and four gave no opinion. These responses reflect a real mix of opinion on the relative importance of writing vis-à-vis the other modalities. A related statement, “Time spent on writing needs to be limited because there is always so much to cover,” elicited agreement or strong agreement from 13

respondents. Seven claimed no opinion, and 14 disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Agreement may not, in all cases, reflect a de-privileging of writing, but an attempt to equalize time spent on each modality. However, this statement also illustrates one of the underlying, but not often articulated, assumptions about writing—that is, that writing is something added to the curriculum, rather than a basic component of the existing syllabus or textbook.

Several questions addressed problems specific to second language learning. Only five instructors agreed that “Conscientious teachers who want to improve student writing will point out all errors on each student paper they read.” However, opinion was strongly divided as to whether “Writing assignments in large classes are too burdensome for the instructor.” Teachers’ responses to these two statements would indicate different perceptions of and experiences with various writing and assessment practices. While all but one undecided respondent disagreed with the statement that “Students can’t write in their second language until they have mastered grammatical structures and a large vocabulary,” over half of the instructors believed that “Poor grammar and inadequate vocabulary are the most serious writing problems of second language students.” This seems to indicate that, while instructors believe they should not be micro-correcting student papers, they still are focusing on problems of grammar and vocabulary, rather than on content or critical thinking skills.

Our survey also addressed some of the potential difficulties inherent in the kinds of personal communicative writing typical in beginning and intermediate language classes. In proficiency-oriented instruction, the basic principles involve beginning with communicating about the self and moving outward to communicating about the world.

Because the initial focus in beginning and intermediate language courses is on the students' own personal experiences, they are frequently asked to write about their personal lives, families, interests, etc. The major components of the proficiency guidelines (content, function, and context) all move from the personal to the abstract. Communicating about personal topics remains a primary goal for a long period of time in the second language classroom. So, although there is strong agreement that "Students write best when writing about their own lives and experiences," and many foreign language textbooks are based on this assumption, many instructors also recognize that personal topics should be approached with caution and that "Students should not be expected to reveal their private experiences in their writing." Students should not be required to reveal sensitive or painful aspects of their personal lives, and language teachers do not want to be treated as counselors.

## **2. Student Survey**

At the end of Fall Quarter 1993 we distributed a survey to all German and Scandinavian language students. Four hundred and nineteen surveys were completed and returned. This survey (see Appendix E) was designed to elicit student perceptions of the type and frequency of writing activities in their language classes, and their assessment of the value of writing as a learning tool. Our initial examination of the surveys showed that students had widely varying perceptions of the types and frequency of writing activities, even within the same class section. In one section of German 1103, for example, only four out of ten students indicated they had used brainstorming in their language class; only seven out of ten students recalled doing freewriting. Within this same section, seven out of ten students recalled doing writing activities more than three times a week; other



responses varied from one to three times a week. When asked, “Does your instructor correct your homework for grammatical errors?” one student in this same German 1103 section responded “rarely”; four students responded “often” and five, “most of the time.” We found a similar inconsistency in student responses to many questions on our survey.

This problem of inconsistency, which has made analysis of this material difficult, was also evident in our survey of teacher attitudes. We found that teachers, as well as students, also had differing perceptions and definitions of what constitutes writing, grammar, assessment, etc. These differing perceptions were also revealed in the language teachers’ feedback forms (see Appendix D) collected throughout the year, and placed in our writing activities binders.

Our survey showed that almost all students want and expect grammatical errors on student assignments to be corrected in some way. Some students indicated that they would like errors to be noted, but to correct them themselves. Most students claim to review and keep homework assignments that are returned to them. But the research on foreign language writing assessment has shown that micro correcting does not improve language skills in any quantitative way. Students often feel that a teacher who does not correct or mark errors on their homework has not read their work, is lazy, or is not a good teacher. Students, as well as teachers, need to realize that learning from homework assignments does not depend on error-correction. Instead, the most helpful feedback tends to focus on the content of the entire text rather than on minute linguistic points.

The question that raised the most interesting response for us was, “Has your writing—either in your second language or your first language—improved this quarter? How? In what way?” Students who believed that their writing had improved almost

always referred to improved grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. It appears that both students and teachers tend to perceive “writing” as a means of demonstrating grammar and vocabulary skills, rather than as an expression of content or critical thinking ability. Furthermore, the type of assessment used plays a critical role in how improvement is perceived by both teachers and students. For example, techniques that focus on sentence-level corrections actually encourage the perception that grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure are the most important elements for good writing in the foreign language.

Both the teacher and the student surveys suggest that there is a wide range of opinions on the nature and role of writing in the foreign language. The student survey illustrated that there are different perceptions not only between the teacher and the students but also among students within the same class as to the types of writing that took place throughout the quarter. Furthermore, there appears to be a gap between writing theory and actual practical classroom application. The teaching assistants in our program have thought seriously about issues of writing in the foreign language classroom and are acquainted with much of the theoretical research in the field. Yet, these theories are often not practiced in the classroom. This could be due, in part, to institutional constraints (the teaching assistants have to follow a set syllabus), reluctance to change, or a continued perception that writing is frustrating and time-consuming for both the student and the teacher.

### **Summary**

The responses from our surveys point to a need to continue to examine how effectively we use (or don't use) writing in our language instruction, and the need to

refine both the process and the product of writing in our language curricula. We have found that both teachers and language students need to be involved in learning new ways to use writing to develop language proficiency.

Research within the field of Composition Studies and English as a Second Language has provided a rich source of knowledge about writing, and how the use of effective writing strategies affects learning across the curriculum. Although more research needs to be done on writing specific to second language acquisition, language teachers can learn from the existing research the important role writing plays in learning. Due to the assessment difficulties we encountered and the problem of controlling for just one variable in a study like this, we cannot irrefutably claim that writing activities improved students' foreign language ability. However, we are convinced that this is the case. We have found many examples in our own classrooms showing that using writing-to-learn and process-writing strategies has had a positive effect on the development of foreign language proficiency.

Writing does not have to be a frustrating experience for the foreign language student and teacher, but in order to successfully incorporate writing into the second language curriculum our perceptions of writing have to change. First, we must recognize that there are different types of writing (writing-to-learn, writing as a support skill, writing for communication, academic writing) and that each of these has a place in the foreign language classroom. Second, we must draw on the research in ESL and Composition Studies on the nature of writing and include process-oriented approaches to writing, peer editing, and group conferencing in the foreign language curriculum. Third,

language teachers must realize that writing competence is more than just improving vocabulary and mastering grammar.

Vocabulary and grammar play an important, but small role in the entire writing process. Organization, content, audience awareness, different discourse modes, critical thinking, and cultural issues all play a significant role in writing competence as well. Finally, we must think seriously about issues of assessment. Research in foreign language writing assessment techniques has not shown any correlation between extensive teacher feedback on issues of grammar and vocabulary and student writing improvement (Semke, 1984). Correction does not have to be a long, laborious process that, in the end, only helps decrease student motivation. Instead, writing activities can actually play a role in increasing student motivation and overall language proficiency and, at the same time, do not have to take up endless hours of the instructor's time.

We have included in this report samples of a variety of writing activities, which we have found to be effective in our own teaching. These activities include common themes in foreign language instruction that may be adapted to different language levels and different textbooks.

There are many opportunities to do exciting and significant research in the use of writing in second language education. We have just scratched the surface, but we hope that our initial research will be useful, and that the dialog with our colleagues will continue.

## **Part Two**

### **Writing Activities**

#### **Introduction**

We have organized this section around twenty different categories of writing activities. Under each type of activity we have described three specific examples of how these writing strategies might be applied in the foreign language classroom. These suggested activities include tasks suitable for various language levels and cover a broad range of common content areas in foreign language curricula. These ideas are based on our own teaching experiences, as well as many stimulating discussions with our language-teaching colleagues. While the specific sample exercises here describe situations in German or Scandinavian, they are readily adaptable to any language and are intended to stimulate other instructors to develop their own variations or new activities. Following the description of twenty types of writing activities and classroom examples, we outline two sample class projects, which incorporate a variety of writing-to-learn strategies.

#### **Sample Writing Activities**

**1. Freewrite**—Students write on a given topic for 2-5 minutes without stopping (i.e., they are not allowed to lift their pen or pencil from the paper or make corrections). Freewrites are not intended to be corrected for grammatical accuracy. The focus is on developing fluency and processing ideas rather than on writing accurately. In freewriting we shut down our internal editors and concentrate on generating thoughts and producing language. Freewriting can be used in pre-writing, processing course material,

summarizing, generating ideas and vocabulary, etc. Freewrites can be used at the beginning of a class session to focus attention on the target language and the topic to be covered or at the end of a class session to help students process what they learned in that session. Initially some students might be insecure about freewriting, but once they become accustomed to this exercise they often realize that they know more and are able to write more about a given topic than they previously assumed.

Example 1: At the first-year level, freewrites can be used on an almost daily basis to generate vocabulary on basic topics such as describing one's self, family, living situation, etc.

Example 2: To prepare the class to discuss cultural topics, students can freewrite about their own experiences. For example, they could be asked to freewrite about their own school system or living situation before the discussion turns to making comparisons with the target culture.

Example 3: The students can be asked to freewrite on their reactions to a literary character in a story they have read or to predict the outcome of an unfinished story.

**2. Word Fields**—Students are asked to write associations to a given word or topic either individually or in groups. Word fields are often constructed in the form of a tree. Word fields can generate meaningful vocabulary (including all parts of speech and common expressions) on a variety of topics and are good starter activities for writing longer narratives. Word fields can also be used as both warm-ups and wind-downs as a way to reinforce vocabulary and confidence. As students expand the word associations, they may also see potential ways of structuring their essays. Word fields, which in many

respects are similar to list making, differ in that the vocabulary generated expands in many directions, whereas lists tend to focus on specific vocabulary on a given topic. Word fields work well as both pre- and post-speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities. As a pre-listening activity students can generate a word field around the topic seasons, for example, before listening to a poem or song on the same topic. As a post-reading activity students skim a previously-read text to find all words associated with a given topic, idea, or emotion in the reading assignment.

Example 1: Students in small groups generate word fields around sub-topics associated with the chapter being reviewed for a test. For example, in a chapter on life in the city, groups might be assigned sub-topics such as: in the train station, asking directions, lodging, restaurants, etc. After one minute each group must pass its word field on to the next group who then has one minute to add to it. At the end of the timed period the entire class reviews the word fields. If students generate their word fields directly on transparencies, reviewing them as an entire class is greatly facilitated.

Example 2: In preparation for an essay-writing assignment on sex roles, for example, students work either individually or in groups to create a word field of all vocabulary around this topic. The brainstorming element involved in generating word fields is especially important in finding relationships and developing ideas in composition assignments. As a pre-writing exercise for the essay on sex roles, students might begin generating associations around the words “woman” and “man.” Associations might be generated under such sub-topics as parenthood, clothing, work, behavior, household roles, etc. Discovering

associations in this way not only activates vocabulary, but also often helps the student discover ideas, organize thoughts, and structure the essay.

Example 3: Students write word fields around various characters found in a literary text, video, or film. This can be a warm-up to a class discussion or expanded writing assignment, a review of vocabulary or information, or an approach to comprehending and analyzing plot, characters, and relationships.

**3. List making**—Students create a list of words, ideas, tasks, or priorities.

Example 1: Students can create lists around any topic, for example, grocery lists, lists of what needs to be done before leaving on a trip, packing lists, etc. A list of favorite free time activities or sports could be a useful springboard to a comparison of common free time activities or popular sports with the target culture.

Example 2: In preparation for an exam students are asked to write a list of questions relevant to the course material. In groups students exchange their questions and discuss possible answers. This exercise helps students process course content and encourages collaborative problem-solving and students' responsibility for their own learning.

Example 3: For a variation on the game of concentration, students view a picture or transparency around a particular theme (i.e., table setting, a picnic basket, room in a house, clothing, the body) with a number of objects for one minute. Then the picture is removed and the students have two minutes to make a list of everything they saw with the appropriate articles and/or plural formation.



**4. Visuals**—Students write a title, bubble, new dialog, description, or a story based on a cartoon, comic strip, or other picture. This exercise focuses attention on a specific task in which visual cues unmediated by the use of their native language motivate students to produce in the target language.

Example 1: The instructor hands out a comic strip in the target language with the contents of the bubble in the final frame removed. Students write an ending to the comic strip.

Example 2: Students receive a group of pictures and must identify the stories from which they came. A good example is using illustrations from fairy tales. Students describe in writing which fairy tale is being illustrated in each picture and how they came to their decision.

Example 3: The teacher brings in various pictures from magazines and newspapers. At a lower level, students might determine a title, write a description, or make a list of items in their picture. At a more advanced level, students write a creative story based on their picture.

**5. Charts and Forms**—Filling out charts and forms can develop or test vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, and cultural understanding. Completing charts and forms is a good way to focus attention on producing correct forms of dates, numbers, addresses, and other practical information used on a daily basis in the target culture. Creating charts and forms is another way of processing and organizing course content.

Example 1: Listen to a recorded commercial and fill in a chart listing phone numbers, prices, or other basic information.

Example 2: Fill out a residence permit or visa application for the target country.

This task has real-life applications for students who plan to go abroad, but also can be used to prepare students for a discussion of such issues as immigration and ethnicity.

Example 3: After reading an article, for example on unemployment, create a chart on employment patterns from information gleaned from the article.

**6. Spelling** —Spelling activities can be used to develop and reinforce pronunciation, reading, and writing skills. However, instructors should be careful not to place too much emphasis on spelling in the foreign language classroom. Correct spelling does not play any part in activities such as freewrites or dialog journals. One generally begins to focus on correct spelling only in the final editing stage of process-writing assignments. Learning to spell correctly is a skill, however, and is related to developing both speaking and listening skills.

Example 1: Conduct a spelling bee. Use both familiar and new vocabulary to reinforce sound-symbol associations. The combination of teamwork and competition creates a positive classroom atmosphere.

Example 2: Give students the text of a song or a poem with certain words deleted. They listen to the text and fill in the missing words.

Example 3: As students begin to write at a more advanced level they should learn to use the tools available to them. These include the dictionary and computer spellcheckers in the target language. In the final editing process students should be responsible for correct spelling and usage.

**7. Dialogs**—Students prepare dialogs for real or imagined situations. Dialogs are one of the cornerstones of communicative language learning. The activity of writing a dialog may seem on the surface so self-evident and commonly used that it is unnecessary to mention it here. However, dialog writing assignments can be varied to focus on many different aspects of language learning.

Example 1: Construct a situation in which one person asks another for advice.

Divide the class into small groups. Each group will write a dialog using the same situation, but with different characters (e.g., different class, age, and gender combinations). The assignment could focus on different social registers as well as on correct use of colloquial expressions.

Example 2: Give students a magazine article in the target language. They construct interview questions with an appropriate figure, which would elicit the information found in the contents of the article. For example, students could write questions to interview the former mayor of East Berlin for an article on the reunification of Germany, or students could interview Queen Sonja after reading an article in a women's magazine about the Norwegian Royal family's new summer home. In this assignment students are creating questions, which a reporter might have used when writing the initial article students have read.

Example 3: Students create a dialog between two characters in a story or film. The language in these dialogs should be consistent with the characters' personalities and characteristics. Students could change a narrative passage into dialog, create a dialog between two characters that never meet within the actual

story or film, or enter into the story themselves in order to change the ending or a certain aspect of the story.

**8. Notes**—Notes can be used for a variety of purposes and audiences, such as excusing yourself from an appointment, expressing opinions, or responding to another student’s opinion as in a classroom debate. Note-taking on lectures or readings helps organize thoughts and highlight key ideas.

Example 1: A student writes a note to the teacher explaining why he or she wasn’t in class last Friday.

Example 2: On a cultural or historical topic students take notes outlining arguments both pro and con. They choose one side of the issue, summarizing their position and providing supporting arguments.

Example 3: Students take notes on a cultural/literary/historical lecture. They must then transform their notes into a meaningful summary of the content of the lecture.

**9. Letters**—Students can learn appropriate forms of correspondence through letter writing. Letters can be used in a variety of ways and at all levels. Students can write personal letters or letters to the editor, to a gossip columnist, or to “Ann Landers.”

Example 1: Students write a letter or postcard telling about their recent travels, including appropriate greetings and closings, and concentrating on verb forms (past tense). This could be used in conjunction with a film or video where students describe what they have seen. The letter could also include cultural comparisons.

Example 2: Students write a letter to a prospective student from the target culture interested in their home university (e.g., the princess of Norway) explaining the educational system, and describing the student social milieu. Students' letters should discuss differences and similarities between the education system in the U.S. and the target culture.

Example 3: After completing a literary assignment, students write a letter to the author of the text describing their reactions to the book. If the author is living, the class might choose to actually send the letters. In a variation on this assignment, one class wrote letters in the target language to the president of their university, who was a native speaker of that language, voicing their concerns over student issues.

**10. Description**—Description can be used with any topic and at all levels.

Pictures, objects, and texts can all be used as a basis for description.

Example 1: At the beginning level students write simple descriptions of themselves, their classmates, their families, their homes, their daily activities, etc.

Example 2: Students travel in a time machine to a specific time and place either in the past or the future. They keep a diary, describing what they see and experience.

Example 3: Students are given a picture or a frame from a film, video, or videodisk they are about to watch. They write a description of what they see, including as much detail as possible from all the senses. Their descriptions should include a prediction of what will happen next.

**11. Circumlocution**—This is a way of rephrasing one's thoughts. Circumlocution is a valuable skill for second language learners with limited vocabularies as it helps

develop positive communication strategies. Rather than resorting to their native language (code-switching), students can learn to express themselves in the target language in a roundabout way.

Example 1: Give students either a list of vocabulary items or pictures. Without using the actual word they must be able to describe the item or its function.

Example 2: The instructor writes several phrases or sentences that may be expressed in a variety of ways on the board. Students write down as many different ways of expressing the same thing as they can in a limited amount of time. As a whole the class compares their lists.

Example 3: Students read a passage that is written in formal or academic language and re-formulate the passage in their own words.

**12. Summaries**—Summaries of texts, videos, or films can be used to check comprehension and to develop writing skills beyond the sentence level.

Example 1: At a lower level students write five sentences about the content of a text, dialog, film, etc. Then they are asked to put these sentences in a logical order, combining sentences where appropriate to form a summary.

Example 2: Students write a summary of a story from the perspective of a minor character in the text. This encourages a deeper understanding of the text and a greater awareness of the significance of point of view.

Example 3: Students write a book or film review based on a text they read or a film they have seen. This review must include a short plot and character summary as well as all the other elements of a good review. Students should read reviews from different sources in preparation for this assignment. Then each student

should write a review for a particular publication. In this way, the student will also focus on audience and register.

**13. Story telling**—In story telling students practice writing cohesive narratives with logical sequences of events. Writing stories involves practicing many elements important in communication: description, transition, point of view, interpretation, etc. As students write their own stories and review the work of their peers, they develop an understanding of these aspects of narration.

Example 1: Students organize a set of related pictures into a sequence and then write 1-2 sentences for each picture. Afterwards they should organize the story into a smooth narrative.

Example 2: After reading a portion of a text or seeing part of a film, students write an ending to the story.

Example 3: Students should take the plot of a story they have read or a film they have seen and write a continuation, adding new characters, elements, or settings.

**14. Journals**—Students conduct a written dialog with themselves, their instructor, or with fellow students through a journal, writing on a regular basis. This extensive writing activity encourages students to process classroom activities and learning. Dialog journals may be a vehicle for students to ask questions, to take risks either linguistically or personally, to raise important issues, or to work through difficult course material. Topics may be assigned or chosen by the student. The dialog journal is a place in which students can explore various topics and means of expression to develop fluency by writing extensively without fear of the instructor's red pen.

Example 1: One student randomly selects a word. Every class member writes in their dialog journal as extensively as they can about that word. At the very beginning level this may not be more than a list of related words. As students progress, they will begin to write sentences, paragraphs, and longer narratives.

Example 2: Students pair up with a journal partner and exchange journal entries once a week. They not only write on topics discussed in class, but also on topics of personal interest. This exchange continues throughout the quarter or semester. Several times throughout the term the instructor may collect the journals and join the dialog.

Example 3: Dialog journals can also be used as student-teacher communication about specific course requirements, linguistic questions, or other course issues.

**15. Process-oriented/Peer-reviewed essays**—Students write various drafts of an essay, which are reviewed by their peers at various stages of the process. Students bring two copies of an assigned essay to class. Working in groups of three, they exchange essays with their peers. Students review their peers' drafts according to criteria established by the instructor. Students receive comments and feedback from their peer reviewers during the following class session. These comments focus on content, organization, and narrative structure. A second round of peer review takes place after students have revised their essays according to the feedback they have received. At this stage they begin to focus on issues of accuracy as well as continue to work on improving the content and organization. Students turn in their final essay along with all previous drafts and peer reviews. Assessment should take into account both the process and the final product. Process-oriented writing can be done at all levels.



Example 1: Students pretend that they are going to study abroad. They write a letter to their host family describing themselves, their family, their interests, etc. (all topics common in beginning language classes) and asking questions about the target country. Peers comment on the letters, discuss appropriate letter forms, and make suggestions regarding expansion or clarification of topics.

Example 2: Working in small groups, students use a process-oriented approach to research and prepare a classroom presentation on an aspect of the target culture. Students write letters or e-mail to real sources in order to gain information on their topic. For example, a group working on the environment might contact environmental groups, a group preparing a presentation on the educational system would contact various educational institutions. Although the presentation might be in another format (e.g., oral, video, posters), students begin by producing a written text. All stages of the work including the letters and the script involve a process-approach.

Example 3: In a literature class students write an analysis of a text or a comparison of two texts. Academic writing at the advanced level requires a different style than at the beginning levels where writing focuses primarily on the personal. Students at a more advanced level often struggle with writing academic discourse in the foreign language, and instructors of literature classes are often frustrated and disappointed with their students' work. A process-approach benefits students, because as they write and review their peers' essays they become aware of various ways to approach a topic or text and conscious of issues

of developing and organizing ideas as well as the use of appropriate forms of academic discourse.

**16. Film and Video**—Film and video are valuable resources in a foreign language classroom because they combine visual, audio, and cultural elements. In addition, film is a genre with which most students are comfortable. Writing activities make this medium interactive, rather than allow students to be passive observers. The use of film and video can range from a single frame to a full-length feature film.

Example 1: Students watch several commercials from the target culture, filling in charts with pertinent information. Working in groups, they create and produce their own commercials.

Example 2: Students watch a video without the sound and then write texts or dialogs for the visual image.

Example 3: After seeing a full-length film, the class views a short segment from the film. Breaking into small groups, students write sequence analyses. Each group focuses on a different aspect of the analysis, for example, sound, characters, setting, editing, symbolism, etc. Their analysis includes how these elements are important within this segment as well as for the entire film.

**17. Interactive computer use**—Using computers has the potential to change foreign language education in significant ways by bringing the target culture closer and making communication almost instantaneous. Students and teachers can communicate with each other electronically outside of class. Process writing is also facilitated by the ease of revising text on a word-processing program. The World Wide Web provides a

good resource for students seeking current information on almost any topic in the target culture.

Example 1: Students communicate with other students in the target culture through the Internet as e-mail “key pals.” E-mail exchanges could also be done with language students at other institutions. There are also “chat groups” or “list serves” for foreign language students.

Example 2: Students can use collaborative writing software to compose, edit, and comment upon group writing projects. This type of software allows a group of students to work on a text simultaneously from different computers, either in the lab, across campus, or from home. Spell-checkers, dictionaries and thesauruses are available on computer for most foreign languages, and students should be encouraged to use them.

Example 3: Students create web pages on a variety of topics, focusing on current events and cultural or literary topics. Students can write weekly news stories, write author biographies, or create links to other resources on the Internet. Publication on the web provides students with the sense of reaching a real audience with their writing, rather than submitting material to the teacher who is already an “expert” on the subject.

**18. Creative Writing**—Creative writing assignments motivate students to explore, play with, and find new ways to use words and language. They encourage students to expand their linguistic range. For many students, creative writing is enjoyable and makes them think about the foreign language in new ways.

Example 1: Poetry writing can be used at all levels. Concrete poems are especially effective for students with a basic vocabulary. Writing poetry at the beginning levels allows students to realize that they can function imaginatively and express sophisticated thoughts with a limited vocabulary. Writing poetry also encourages students to think about the sounds of words. At more advanced levels students can write parodies or imitations of poems in the target language, and experiment with different styles and more complex linguistic forms.

Example 2: Fairy tales and folk literature are an important part of every culture. Students can write parodies, variations, or contemporary versions of folk tales making use of the conventions of the genre.

Example 3: Students write a sequel to a book they have read or film they have seen. Emphasis can be placed on character development, variations in plot, or conventions of style according to the language level and purpose of the assignment.

**19. Processing Course Materials**—Writing to learn activities are not only helpful for developing language skills, but also for processing course content. It can be useful for students to think through the processes involved in language acquisition, skill development, or the learning process itself.

Example 1: Students choose a topic on which they would like to write an essay. They describe in writing how they would approach the topic and how they would plan and structure their essay.

Example 2: At the end of a class period students write a summary of the important topics covered in class that day. This can also be done at the end of a term or semester in preparation for the final exam.

Example 3: Students explain in writing some aspect of language use or a grammar point, which has been covered in class. Students can compare their explanations in small groups.

**20. Spiraling writing activities**—It is important to not isolate any of the modalities in the language classroom, but to link tasks to include all dimensions of language learning. Writing activities, for example, can be important pre- or post-listening, reading, and speaking activities. Furthermore, writing can be used as an avenue to explore the target culture. Most of the writing activities described above will spiral naturally out of or into activities involving all other modalities.

Example 1: Almost any exercise in list making or creating word fields provides an excellent springboard for class discussion as it reviews and activates students' vocabulary on a given topic. These exercises are good pre-reading, pre-listening or pre-writing activities.

Example 2: Dialog writing proceeds naturally into classroom role plays of the written material. Once students have practiced performing from a written script, they are able to move on to creating dialogs spontaneously.

Example 3: Working in groups, each group receives a picture containing one portion of a story sequence. The spokesperson in each group describes the action in their picture to the other groups. The recorder in each group writes down what they understand from the other groups' descriptions without seeing the pictures.

Then the small groups work on retelling the entire narrative in oral or written form. The class as a whole compares their re-constructions first with each other and then with the picture sequences provided by the instructor.

### **Sample Class Projects**

#### **Class Newspaper**

Creating a newspaper is an excellent way for students to use the foreign language creatively, while simultaneously exploring elements of culture and focusing on current events. This activity can be completed at all levels of language learning ranging from the end of the first year to advanced classes.

Students divide into small groups around various general topics they want to research for the class newspaper. For example, one group might investigate holidays in the target country, another might research sports, and another group could focus on politics, economics, or the environment. As a group, students research their topic and discuss their findings. Then each member of the group must come up with a sub-topic of the theme to study in more detail. Using a process-writing approach, each group member writes an article on his or her sub-topic for the class newspaper.

Step 1: After choosing their general topic, students work in groups to create a word field around their topic. As the students begin to research their topic, they should continue to expand their word fields.

Step 2: Groups begin to research their topic in the library as well as on the Internet. They might write letters to various organizations in the target culture (for example, if they are writing on political parties in the target country they might

contact each party and request material), send a list of questions to their e-mail “key pals,” or research various sites on the World Wide Web.

Step 3: After collecting material on their general topic, group members then choose a sub-topic that interests them. For example, a group researching sports in Germany might choose the following sub-topics: an interview with Boris Becker, a description of female German athletes participating in the next Olympic Games, or a discussion of German athletic teams after re-unification.

Step 4: Working individually, each group member makes a list of the key elements that have emerged from research on his or her sub-topic. Students may resort to various writing-to-learn strategies during this planning session: outlines, expanded word fields, notes, charts, or lists.

Step 5: Students prepare a rough draft on their sub-topic. On the day the draft is due, they bring in a copy for each of their group members. Each member reads and comments on the articles written by the other group members before the next class session. The instructor should provide a feedback form, which focuses on the content and organization of the article, including questions such as the following: What do you find most interesting about your partner’s article? Are there areas that are not clear, that could be expanded, or that do not fit in the overall structure of the article? Is the headline both interesting and appropriate?

Step 6: After receiving and discussing group comments, students continue to revise their articles. On the day that the second draft is due, students bring in copies for their group members and repeat the same process. The instructor should provide a feedback form for the second draft, which continues the

discussion of content and organization, but also begins to focus on issues of accuracy.

Step 7: On the day that the final article is due, students turn in a folder containing the final edition as well as all previous drafts and peer comments to the instructor. In addition, students bring in a disk with the article, so that the final editing and layout of the newspaper can begin. The instructor may wish to do this part of the process, or have a student editorial board (chosen by the class) carry out these tasks.

At the same time as the above tasks are being completed, each group is also involved in completing another section of the newspaper. For example, one group will be responsible for writing an editorial, another group will write horoscopes, another will create comics, etc. Each group also writes a “Dear Abby” letter asking for advice. The groups then exchange letters and write a response to one another’s letters. These are also included in the newspaper. Each class member receives a copy of the published newspaper, which could be distributed to other language classes or posted on the World Wide Web.

### **Writing a Mystery**

Writing a mystery can be a good creative writing project for the foreign language class. Studying the genre of mystery is a good springboard to discussion and developing an understanding of literary genres, since even in a class of non-readers every student understands the structure of a mystery from watching television or films. Therefore, mysteries can be a good choice as the first full-length novel for intermediate language



students. This creative writing project is generally combined with reading a mystery novel and/or watching a mystery film.

The exercises below not only create an awareness of the elements of a good mystery, but also alleviate some of the anxiety inherent in longer creative writing assignments. Because students produce such a great quantity of related text in these informal assignments, they become comfortable with the idea of producing a five to ten page narrative text. These exercises may be used in various combinations or sequences, culminating in a finished mystery.

Jigsaw: The instructor brings to class several copies of a short mystery story in the target language, cut into sections, and distributes one section to each member of the class. The assignment is to figure out what is happening, what role the character in the section plays (hero, villain, victim), and where in the story sequence this section belongs (beginning, middle, or end). The next class period, groups try to assemble the story in the proper order, discussing the strategies they used to determine the story's structure. This can lead to a discussion of various elements, which define the genre.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is used to create a list of vocabulary items useful in talking and writing about the mysteries. Students vie with each other to come up with all kinds of words to describe crimes, heroes, villains, victims, weapons, methods, motives, etc. The instructor transcribes this list and gives a copy to each member of the class for reference.

Freewrites: A series of freewrites is done in class, perhaps several times a week, during the initial stages of the project. Students are asked to freewrite on a variety

of related subjects, describing imaginary heroes, villains, victims, settings, and situations. These freewriting exercises give students confidence in their own creative abilities, and many students use these freewrites as a basis for their plot or characterizations.

Story Starters: Working in small groups, each group receives a plain sheet of paper with an incomplete phrase or sentence in the target language at the top, such as, “It was a dark and stormy night . . .”; suddenly she screamed! . . .”; or “A shot rang out! . . .” The group has five minutes to write what happens next. When the time is up, they pass their sheet on, and the next group continues to add on to the story. This can continue for several rounds. When the exercise is completed, some or all of the story segments are read aloud.

Checklist: Students complete a planning checklist, including descriptions of their characters, settings, crime, motive, plot outlines, etc.

Rough Draft: Students should submit at least one rough draft at an initial writing stage, well before the final draft is due.

As students are working on their own stories outside of class, they are also reading a mystery novel or watching a mystery film in class. The instructor should provide a checklist such as the one mentioned above to help students plan their writing and should also schedule individual conferences at various stages to ensure that students are making progress and provide support for them along the way. If the class members wish, these stories can be collected and made available in a binder if there is a departmental library or reading room accessible, or they can be printed and distributed to the class.

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- Fulwiler, Toby, Michael E. Gorman, and Margaret E. Gorman. "Changing Faculty Attitudes Toward Writing." *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice*. Eds. Art Young and Toby Fulwiler. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1986.
- Gass, Susan M., and Sally Seilaff Magnan. "Second-language Production: SLA Research in Speaking and Writing." *Research in Language Learning Principles, Processes and Prospects*. Ed. Alice Omaggio Hadley. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 1993. 156-197.
- Scott, Virginia Mitchell. *Rethinking Foreign Language Writing*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1996.
- Semke, Harriet D. "Effects of the Red Pen." *Foreign Language Annals* 17.3 (1984): 195-202.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A** Project Description and List of Introductory Readings for Fall 1993  
Workshop

**Appendix B** Teacher Survey: Writing Project Attitude Survey

**Appendix C** Tabulated Results of Writing Project Attitude Survey

**Appendix D** Language Teachers' Feedback Form

**Appendix E** Student Survey Form

**APPENDIX A**  
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LIST OF**  
**INTRODUCTORY READINGS FOR FALL 1993 WORKSHOP**

Dear Colleagues:

Current research indicates that increasing the quality and quantity of writing activities provides effective learning tools across all areas of the curriculum. However, many foreign language teachers shy away from using frequent writing activities, especially in the first two years. Writing assignments are often seen as too unstructured (i.e. allowing too many possibilities for the introduction of new errors) and as too time-consuming for the teacher to correct. Last spring, after attending a workshop sponsored by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, we decided to apply for a small grant to investigate ways in which writing-to-learn activities can most effectively be used in the foreign language classroom, using the Departments of German and Dutch and Scandinavian Languages and Literature for our study. We are investigating the relationship between writing and language learning and ways in which writing can be used to improve the quality of students' educational experience. This packet and the writing workshop on September 21 (and others throughout the year) present an introduction to research and practice on writing and second language acquisition.

The core of our research will consist of a three-part evaluation of the intensive use of writing-to-learn activities:

- 1) We will compare the linguistic progress of the intensive-writing group of students with a control group by comparing the proficiency test results from previous years with results from the experimental group;
- 2) We will evaluate the relationship between the use of intensive writing activities in the foreign language classroom and the development of students' FL proficiency;
- 3) We will evaluate how labor-intensive writing-to-learn activities are on the teacher's part (preparation of assignments, ability to control errors, time spent evaluating student work).

As part of this grant we are asking each of you to use intensive writing-to-learn activities in your language classes at least three times a week and to provide us with information and feedback on these activities throughout the quarter. We hope this workshop will begin a dialogue which will continue throughout the year in regular language teachers' meetings. Writing activities coming out of this workshop will be gathered into a file, along with an annotated bibliography of research in the field which will be available for all language instructors to consult. Please add to this file those writing activities that you find particularly successful.

This packet contains several articles which either address issues central to the use of writing in second language acquisition or provide practical suggestions for implementing writing in the classroom. We hope that you will at least be able to look at these articles before our first workshop. They are placed in a sequence to provide an orderly introduction to the topic of writing and language instruction. In addition, these articles will continue to be a useful resource for your teaching.

Semke, Harriet D., "Effects of the Red Pen", *Foreign Language Annals*, 17, 3 (1984): 195-202.

*Harriet Semke did this research as part of her Ph.D. while teaching German at the University of Minnesota. This article challenges some commonly-held assumptions about the most effective ways to respond to student writing. The results of her study also contain implications about teacher work-load and issues of the necessity of grammatical correctness in foreign language writing.*



Peterson, Deborah, "Writing to Learn German", *Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn Across the Disciplines*, Anne Ruggles Gere, ed., Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1985: 46-59.

*Deborah Peterson's article provides practical and creative suggestions for implementing writing-to-learn activities in the context of a German language class. These activities would be widely applicable in other foreign language classrooms as well.*

Silva, Tony, "Second language composition instruction: developments, issues, and directions in ESL", *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, Barbara Kroll, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 7-23.

*Silva's article traces the history of second-language writing instruction and provides an overview of four basic approaches to composition instruction: controlled composition model, current-traditional rhetoric, process approach and Writing for Academic Purposes. He discusses the relationship between L1 and L2 composition.*

Dvorak, Trisha, "Writing in the Foreign Language", *Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: Listening, Reading and Writing: Analysis and Application*, Barbara H. Wing, ed. Middlebury, Vermont: NECTFL, 1986: 145-167.

*Dvorak is one of the leading figures in research on Writing in the Foreign Languages. She discusses developments in the field of L1 and L2 composition and their implications for program design and classroom methodology.*

Terry, Robert M. "Teaching and Evaluating Writing as a Communicative Skill", *Foreign Language Annals*, 22, 1 (1989): 43-54.

*Terry offers specific writing assignments that could be adapted to any language classroom and holistic methods of responding to and evaluating student writing.*

Greenia, George D., "Why Johnny can't *Escribir*: Composition and the Foreign Language Curriculum", *ADFL Bulletin*, 24, 1 (1992)" 30-37.

*This article will be particularly helpful to those teaching at the more advanced levels of language instruction. It summarizes many of the issues raised in research in the field which are important to our study.*

In addition to these resources, i.e. the readings, the bibliography, and the file of writing activities to which all language instructors are invited to contribute, we are also available as advocates of Writing Across the Curriculum. Language teachers' meetings throughout the year will also provide an opportunity to discuss issues and share ideas. (Monica Eden and Jana Jakub in German and Torild Homstad in Scandinavian will facilitate these discussions and gather your feedback.). We are counting on your enthusiasm to help make this project a success. Please contact us if we can provide any assistance. We looking forward to seeing you on Tuesday, September 21.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Kaaren Grimstad, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature  
 Torild Homstad, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature  
 Helga Thorson, Department of German and Dutch  
 Ray Wakefield, Department of German and Dutch  
 Michael Kuhne, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing  
 Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Director  
 Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing

**APPENDIX B**  
**TEACHER SURVEY:**  
**WRITING PROJECT ATTITUDE SURVEY**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Writing Project Attitude Survey

Please complete this attitude survey using the following scale:

- 1 -- Strongly Agree
- 2 -- Agree with Qualification
- 3 -- No Opinion
- 4 -- Mildly Disagree
- 5 -- Strongly Disagree

\_\_\_\_\_ Students can't write well in a second language when they don't know how to write in their first language.

\_\_\_\_\_ Conscientious teachers who want to improve student writing will point out all errors on each student paper they read.

\_\_\_\_\_ I write well in my first language.

\_\_\_\_\_ Students should read and critique each other's writing to improve their own writing.

\_\_\_\_\_ Beginning language students are incapable of writing more than half a page in the second language.

\_\_\_\_\_ Instructors need to prevent students from writing beyond their capabilities in their second language.

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing tasks actually used to communicate in real-life situations (pen-pals etc.) provide good models for student writing assignments at the University.

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing assignments in large classes are too burdensome for the instructor.

\_\_\_\_\_ To encourage students to revise their writing, instructors should refrain from giving grades on early drafts.

\_\_\_\_\_ Poor readers are likely to be poor writers.

\_\_\_\_\_ The process approach to writing does not teach students to perform well on in-class essay exams.

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing is the least important of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) for students of a second language.

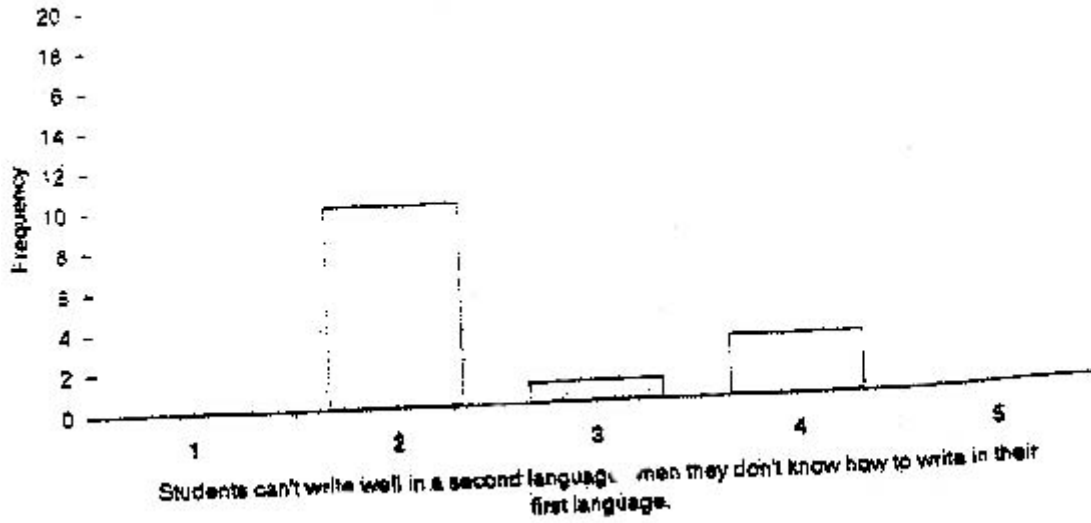
\_\_\_\_\_ The emphasis on personal and creative writing in the beginning language sequence does not prepare students to write on academic topics in the third year courses.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Teachers in second languages should give one grade for content and another for correct grammar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Many students write poorly because teachers have made them apprehensive about writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Second language instruction should emphasize speaking above all other modalities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asking students to rewrite assignments does not help most students to improve their writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor grammar and inadequate vocabulary are the most serious writing problems of second language students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The proficiency test is necessary to motivate students to acquire mastery of basic writing skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Many instructors are afraid to write because their own writing has been severely criticized in the past.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students can't write in their second language until they have mastered grammatical structures and a large vocabulary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students should not be expected to reveal their private experiences in their writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I hate to write letters and papers in my second language.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writers should always make an outline before beginning to write.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students learn bad writing habits when they read and respond to each other's writing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writing should be de-emphasized because students always try to use their first language and translate words and ideas into their second language.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Students write best when writing about their own lives and experiences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time spent on writing needs to be limited because there is always so much to cover.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If students are allowed to see errors in writing, they will learn incorrect forms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There are fixed rules which govern all good writing.

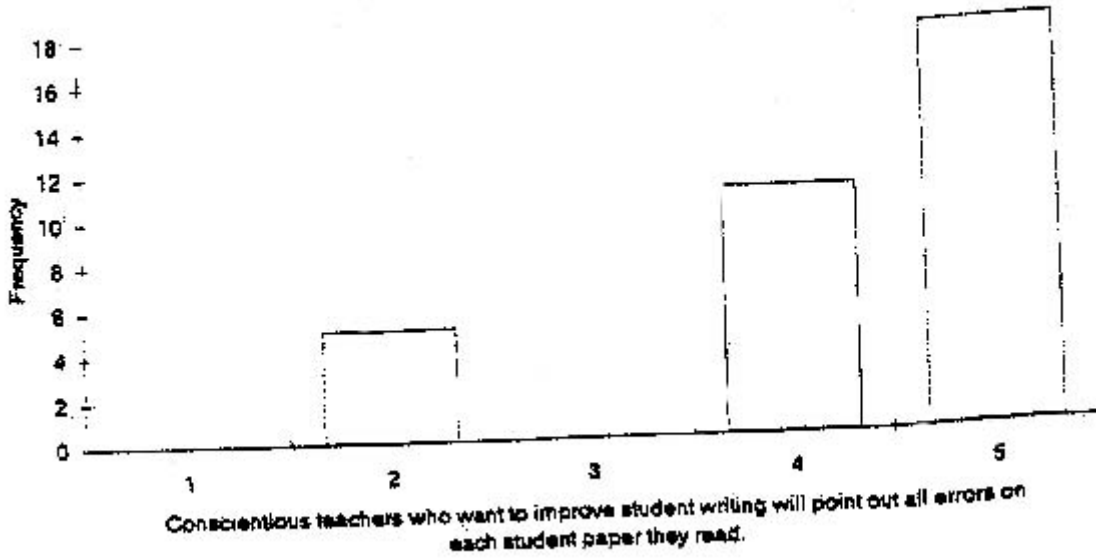
The format and several questions were adapted from Fulwiler, Toby et. al., "Changing Faculty Attitudes Toward Writing," *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice* (Upper Montclair, New Jersey: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1986): 53-67.

**APPENDIX C**  
**TABULATED RESULTS OF**  
**WRITING PROJECT ATTITUDE SURVEY**

Bar Chart for Question 1



Bar Chart for Question 2



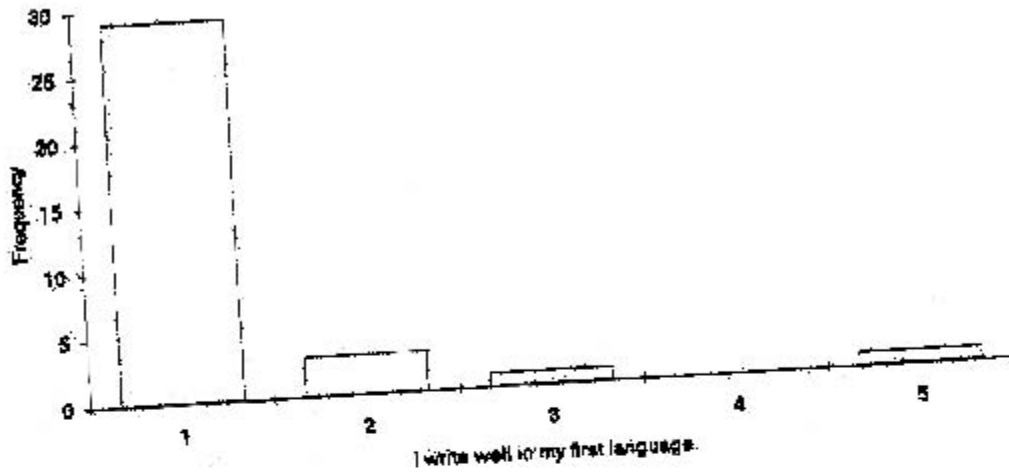
1 – Strongly Agree

2 – Agree with Qualification

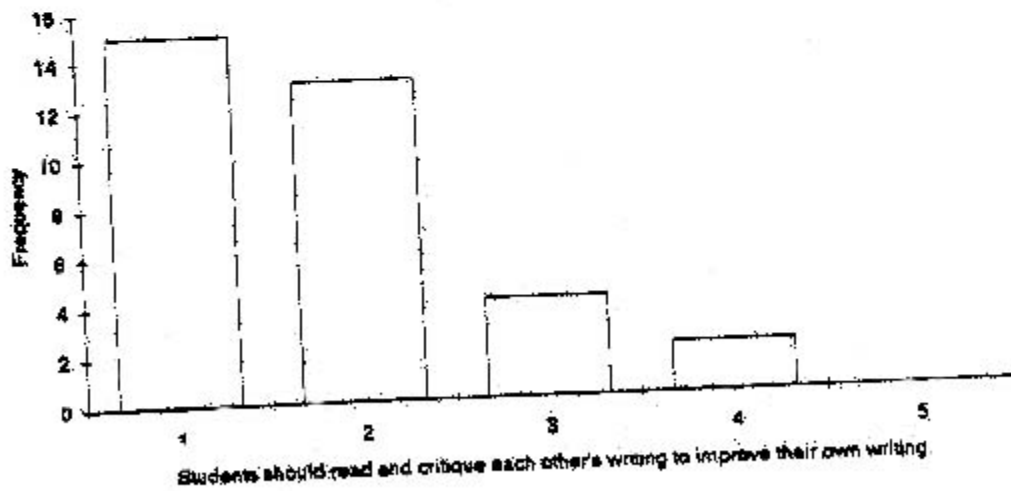
3 – No Opinion

4 – Mildly Disagree

5 – Strongly Disagree

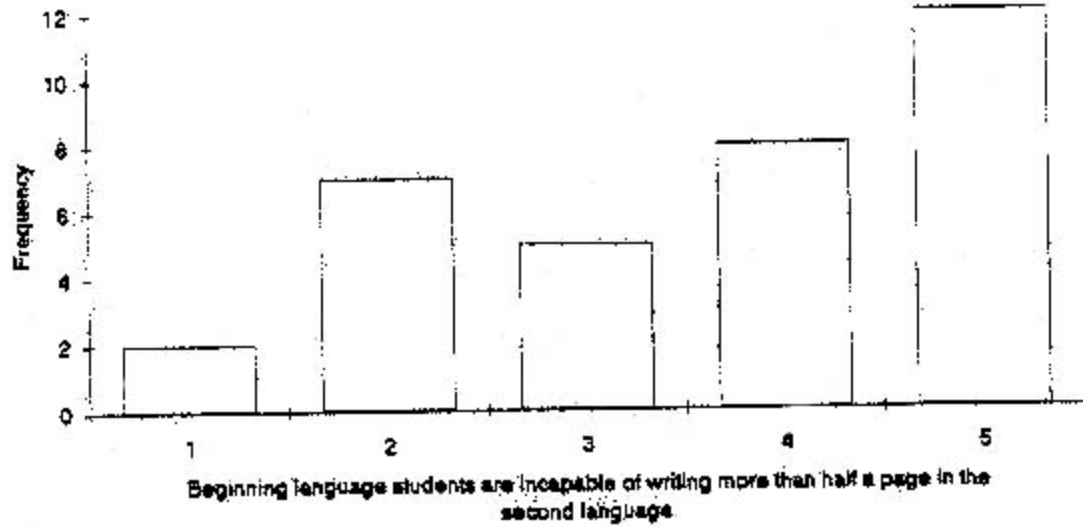


Bar Chart for Question 4

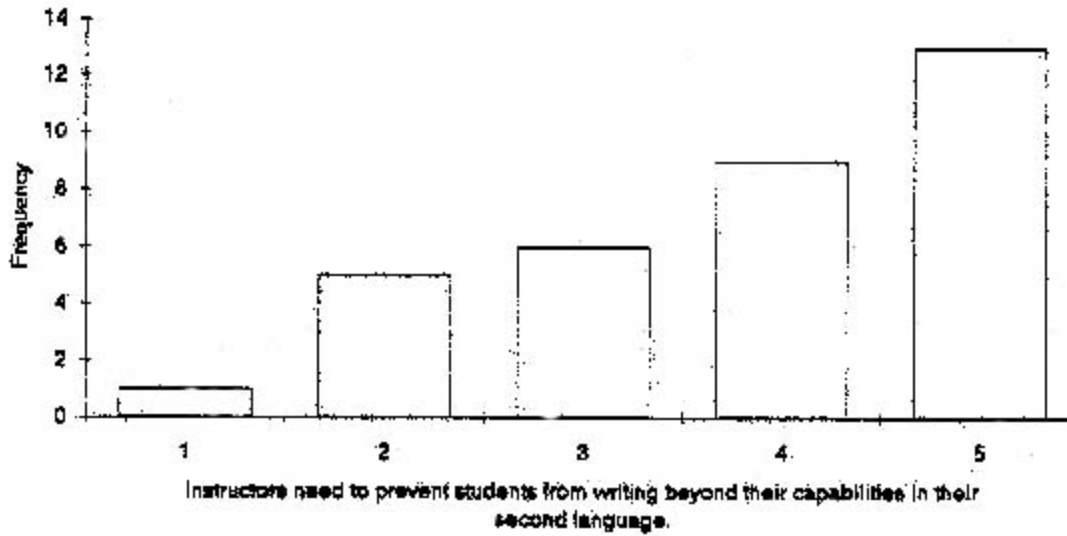


1 - Strongly Agree 2 - Agree with Qualification 3 - No Opinion 4 - Mildly Disagree 5 - Strongly Disagree

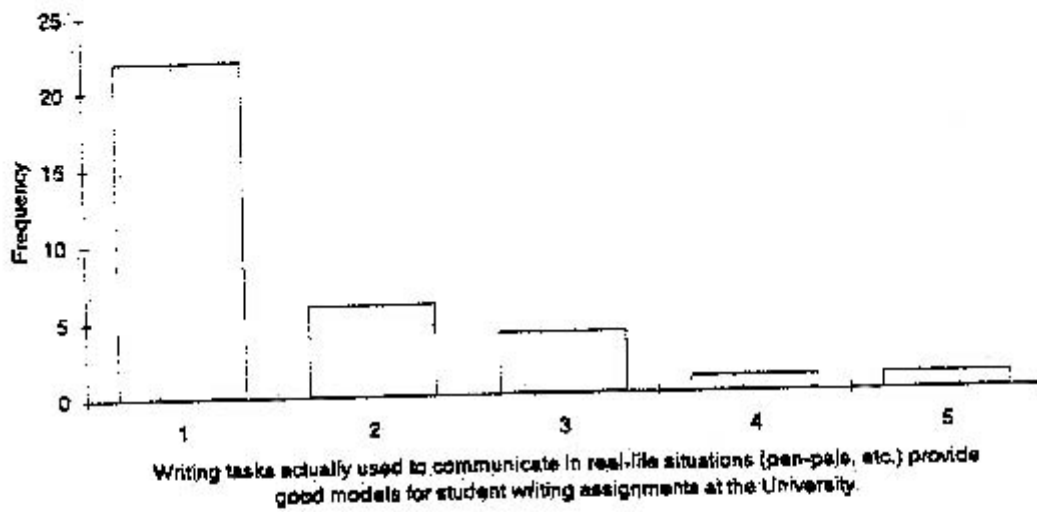
Bar Chart for Question 5



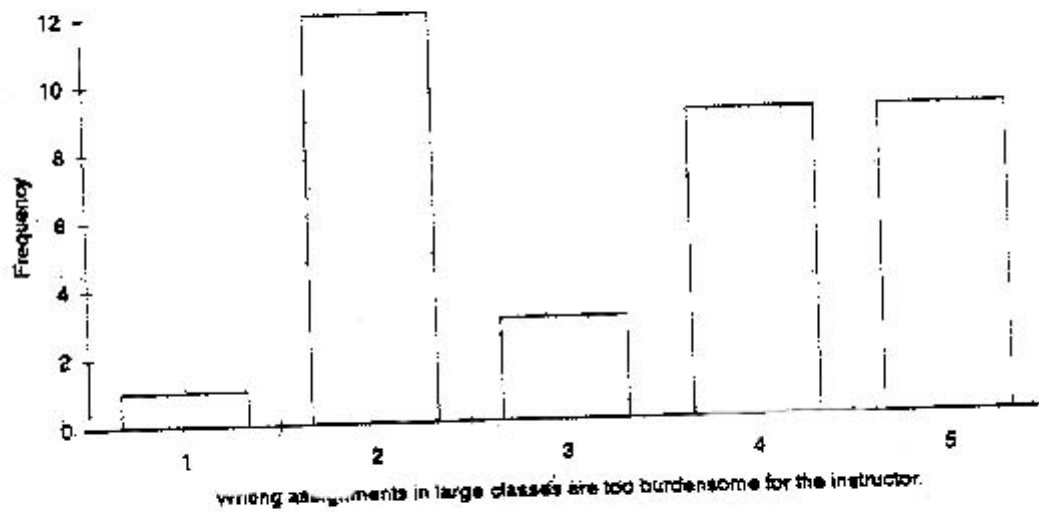
Bar Chart for Question 6



Bar Chart for Question 7.

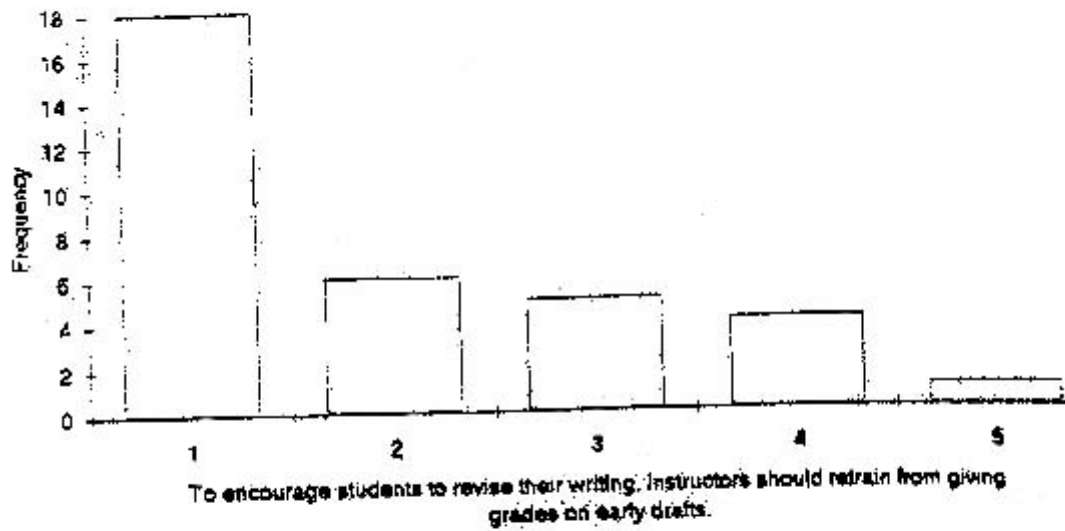


Bar Chart for Question 8

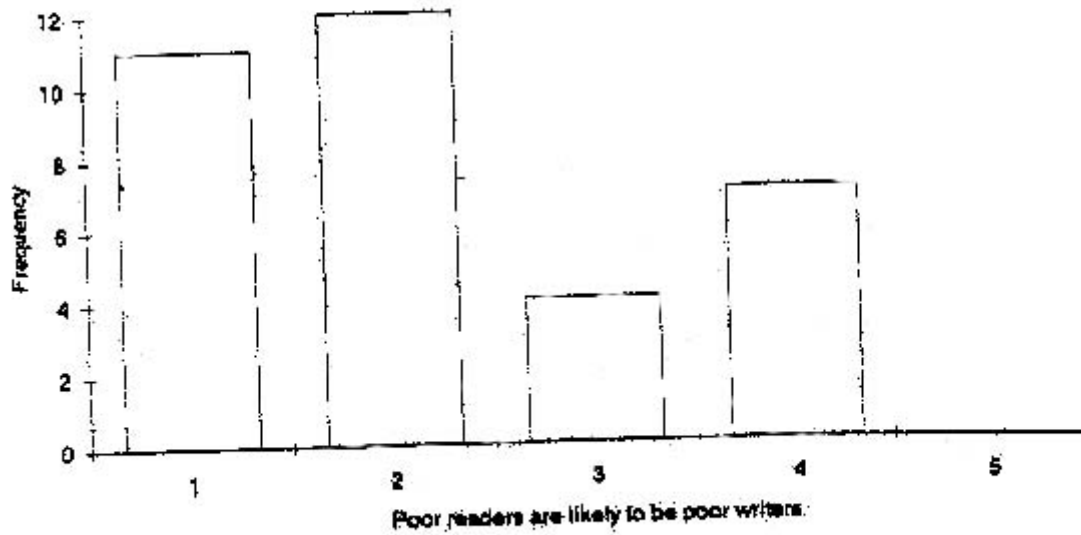


1 - Strongly Agree 2 - Agree with Qualification 3 - No Opinion 4 - Mildly Disagree 5 - Strongly Disagree

Bar Chart for Question 9

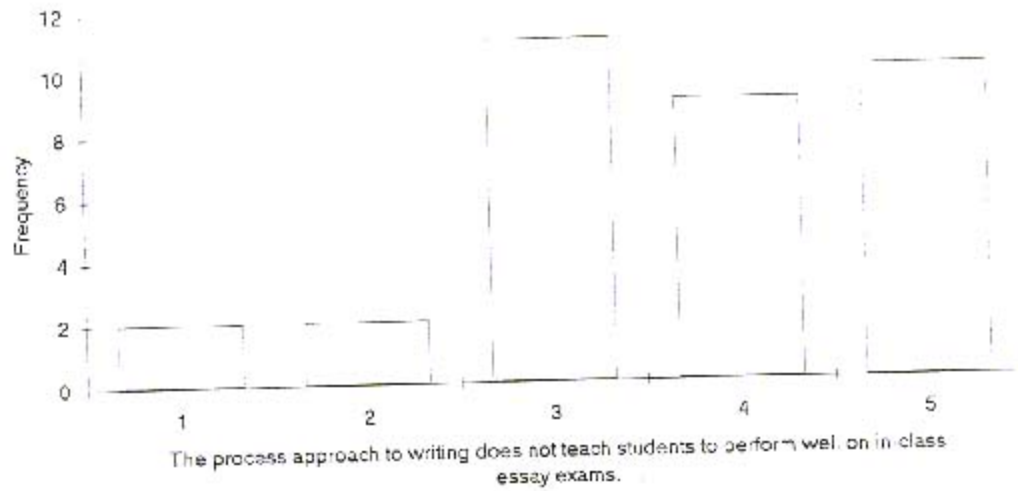


Bar Chart for Question 10

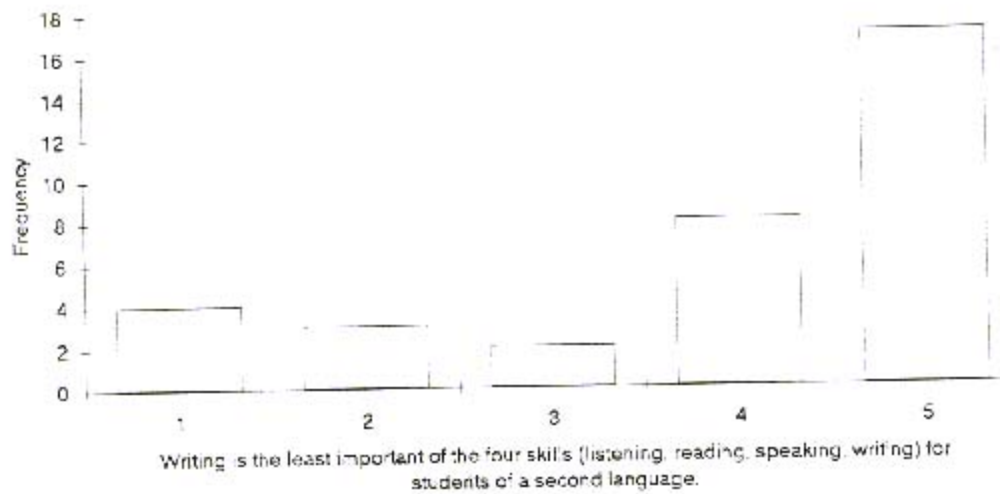




Bar Chart for Question 11

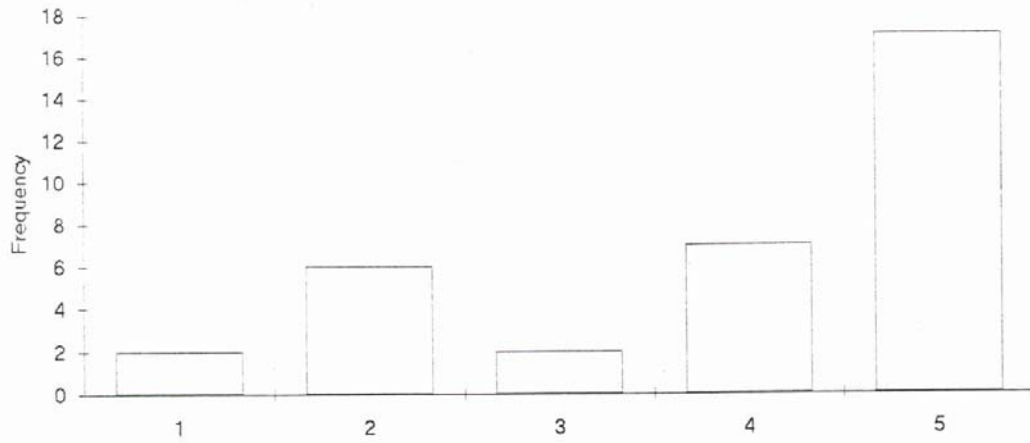


Bar Chart for Question 12



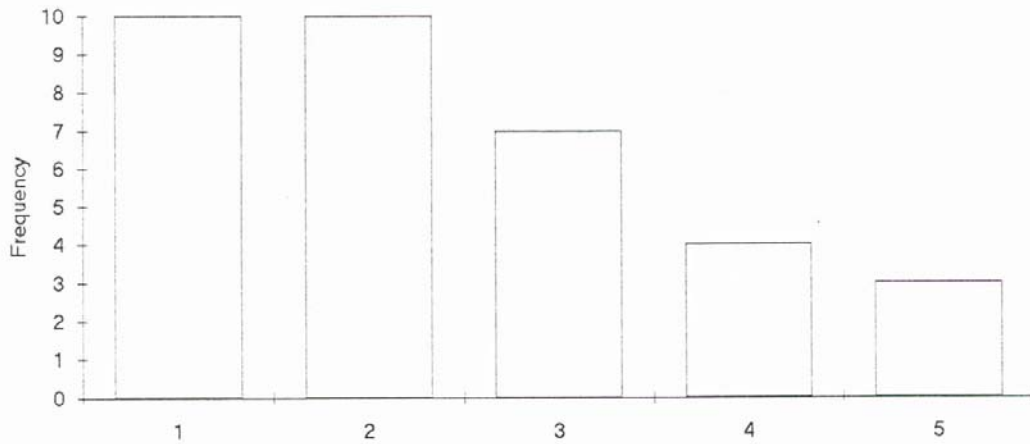
1 – Strongly Agree 2 – Agree with Qualification 3 – No Opinion 4 – Mildly Disagree 5 – Strongly Disagree

Bar Chart for Question 13



The emphasis on personal and creative writing in the beginning language sequence does not prepare students to write on academic topics in the third year courses.

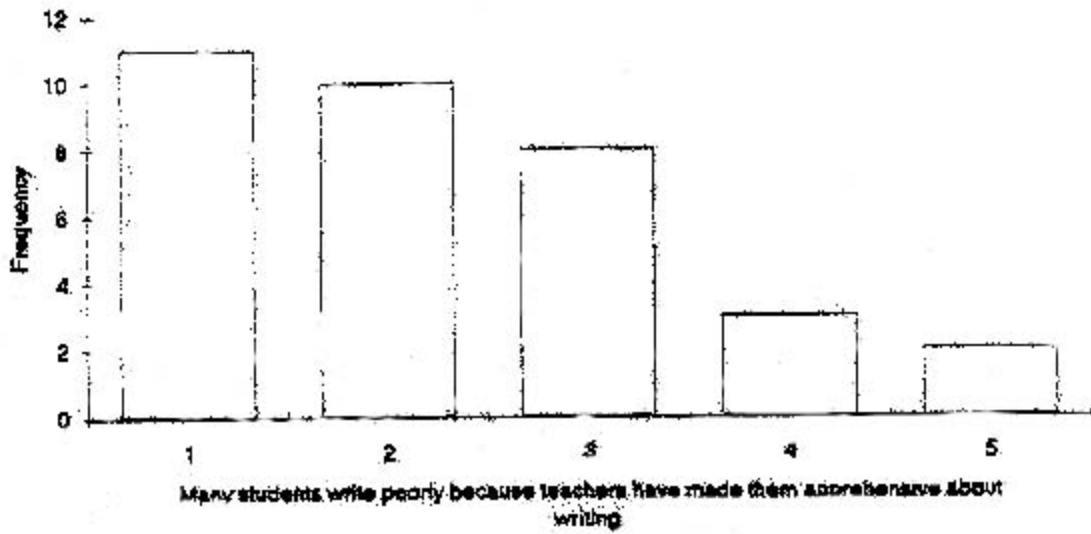
Bar Chart for Question 14



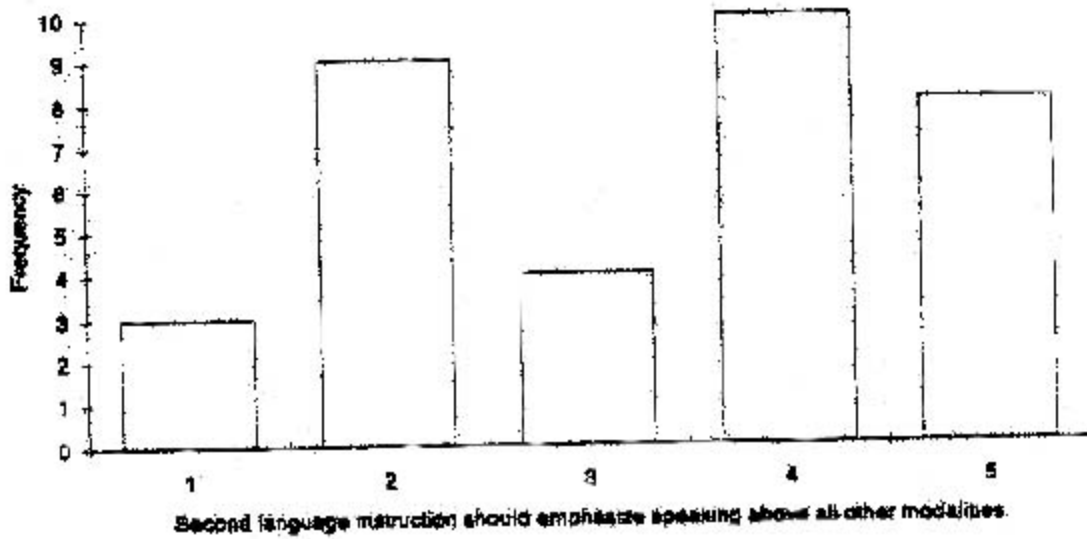
Teachers in second languages should give one grade for content and another for correct grammar.

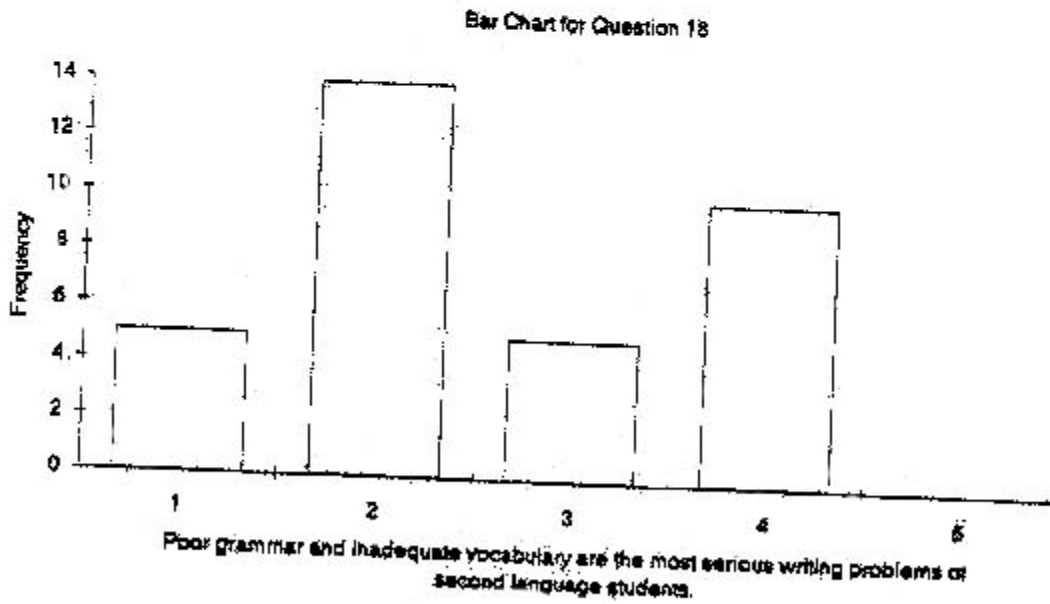
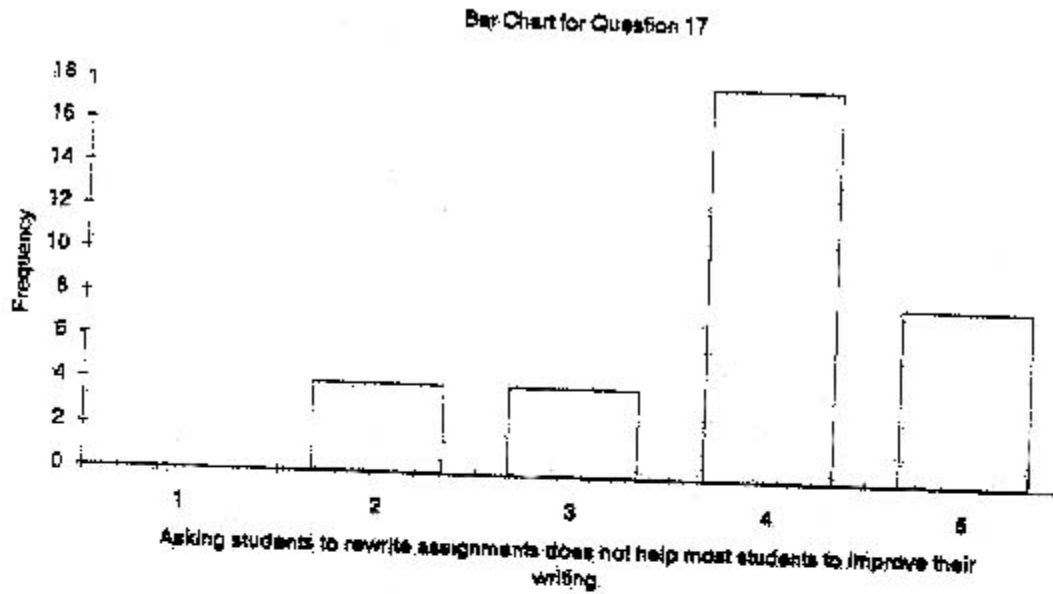
1 – Strongly Agree   2 – Agree with Qualification   3 – No Opinion   4 – Mildly Disagree   5 – Strongly Disagree

Bar Chart for Question 15



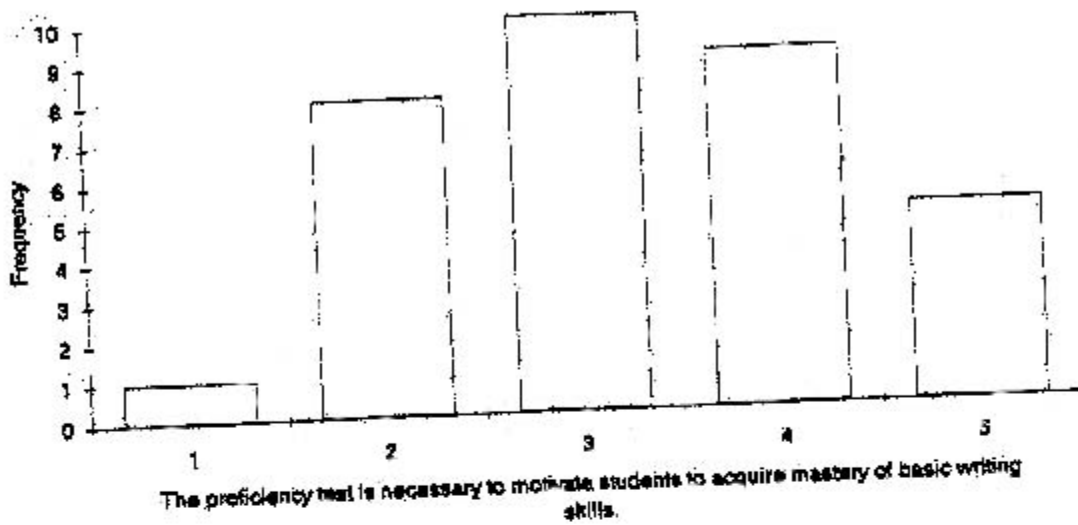
Bar Chart for Question 16



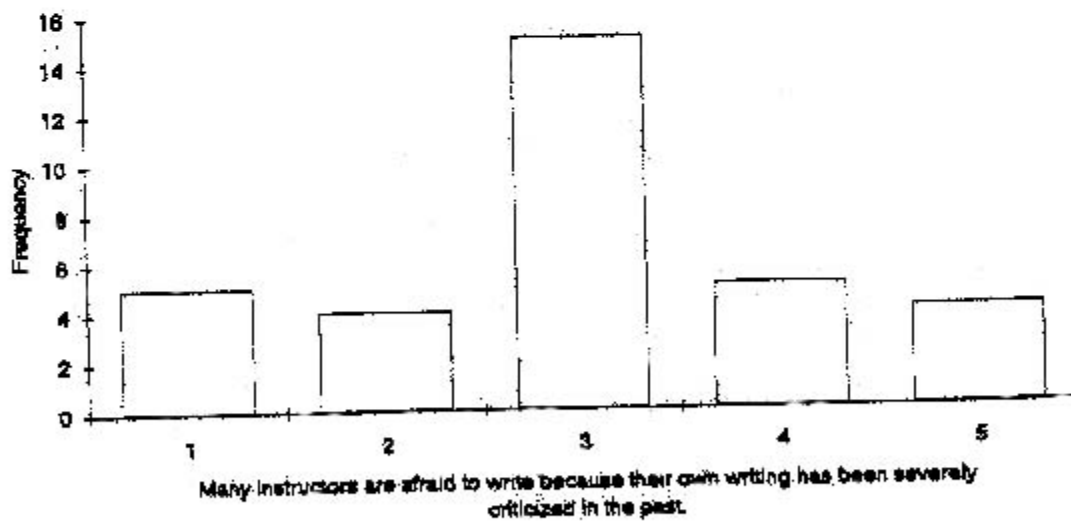


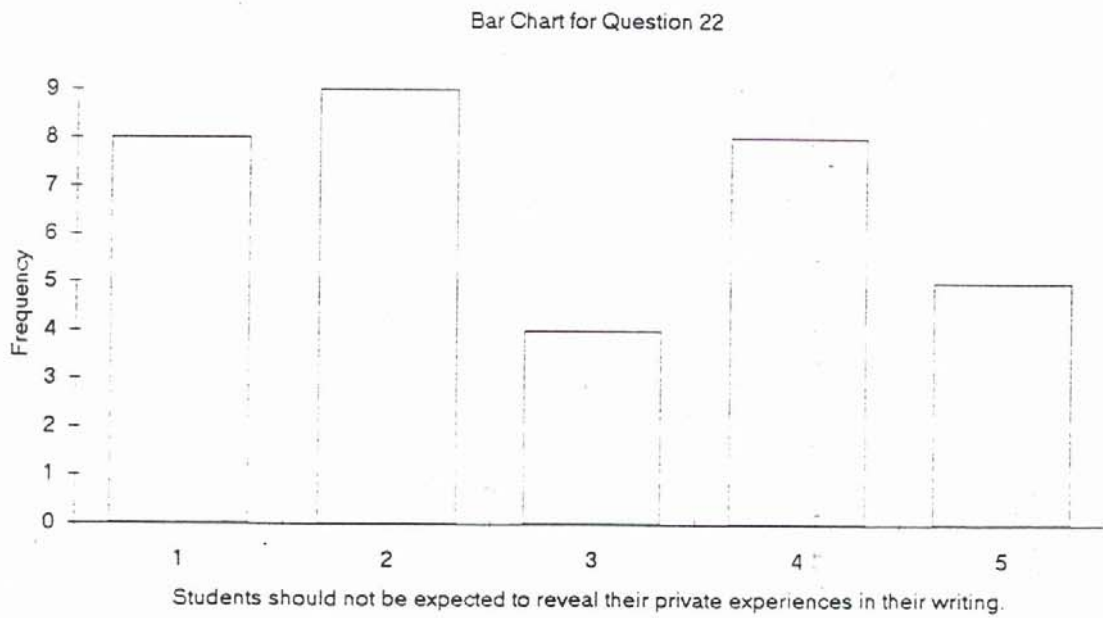
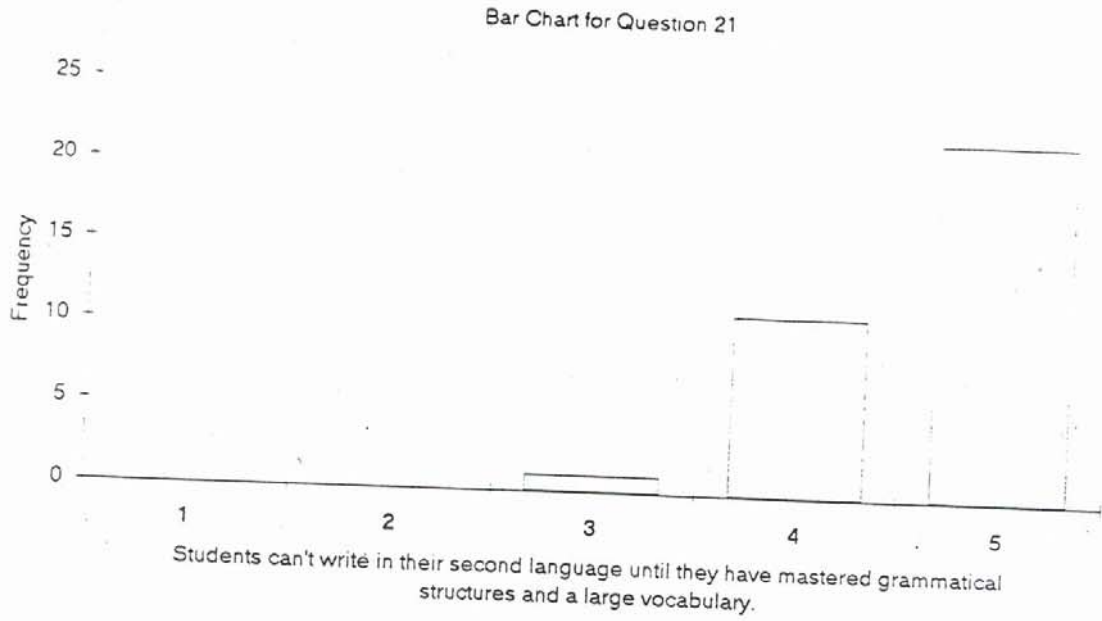
1 - Strongly Agree 2 - Agree with Qualification 3 - No Opinion 4 - Mildly Disagree 5 - Strongly Disagree

Bar Chart for Question 19



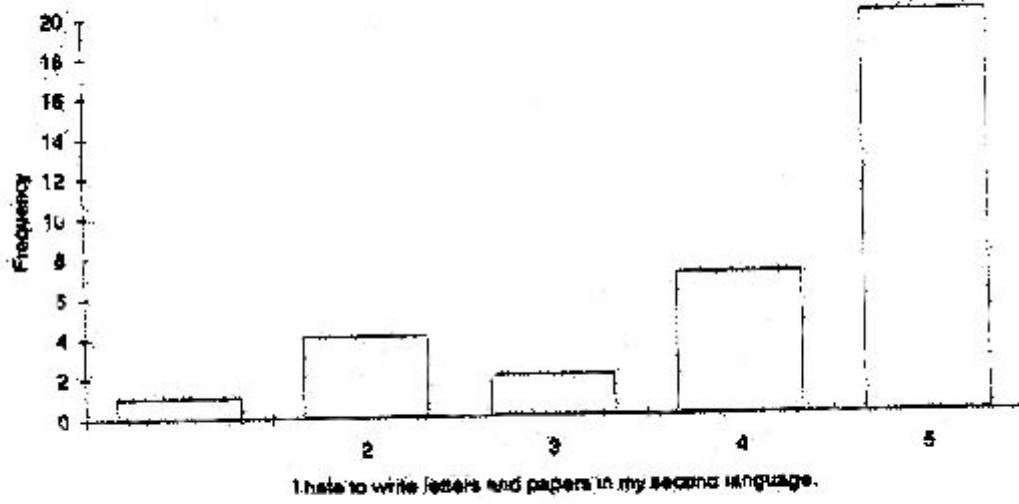
Bar Chart for Question 20



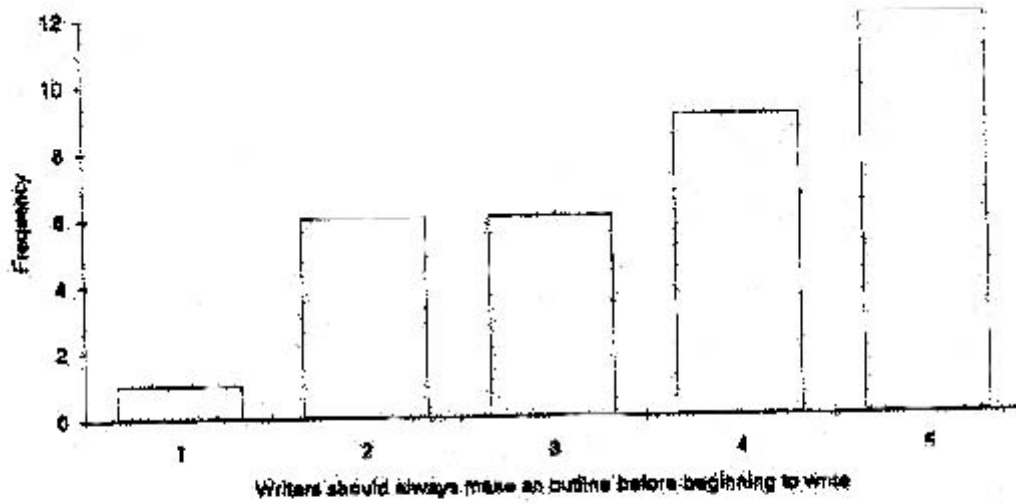


1 – Strongly Agree 2 – Agree with Qualification 3 – No Opinion 4 – Mildly Disagree 5 – Strongly Disagree

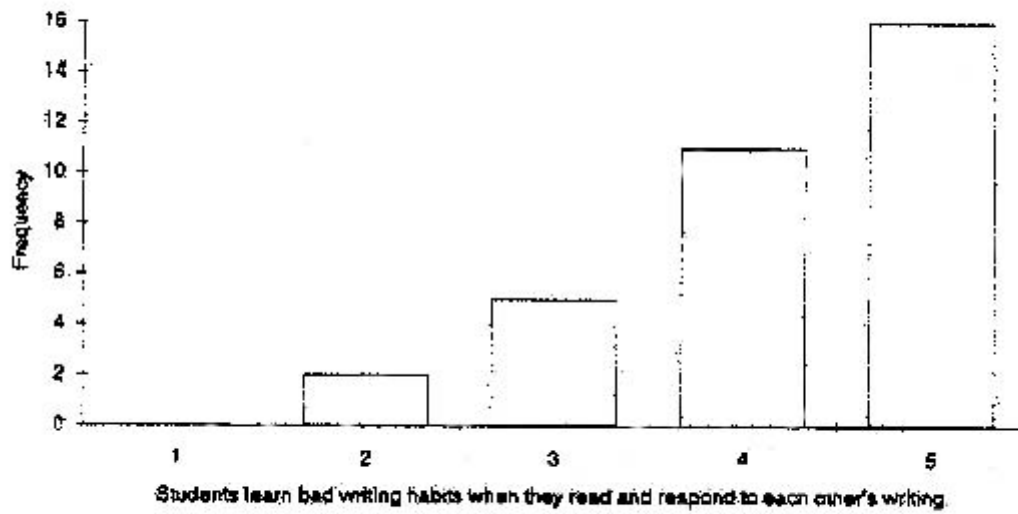
Bar Chart for Question 23



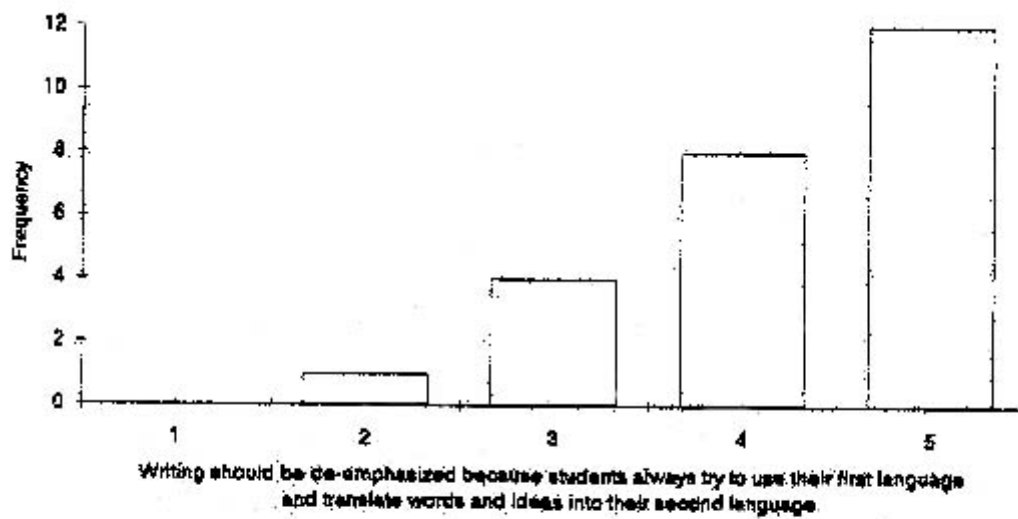
Bar Chart for Question 24



Bar Chart for Question 25

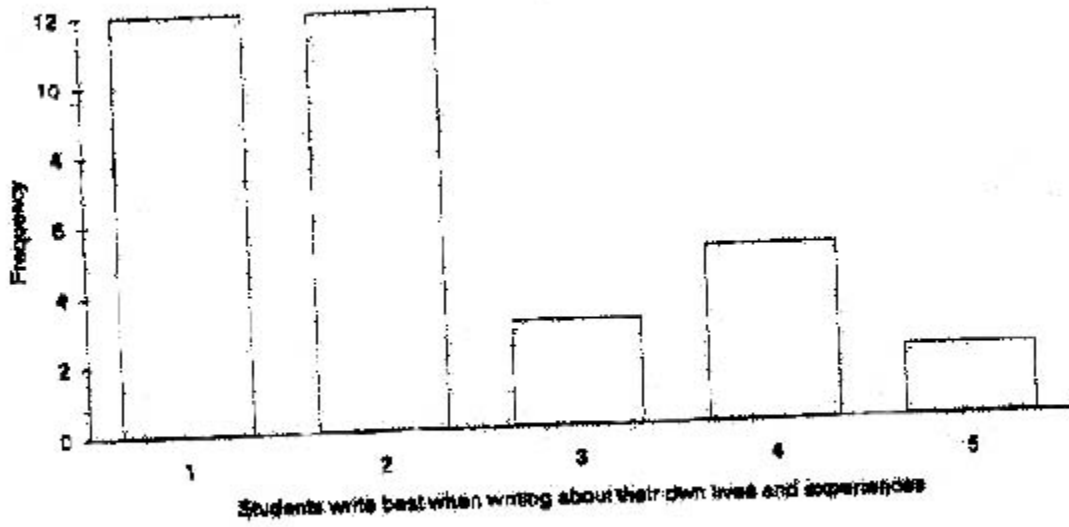


Bar Chart for Question 26

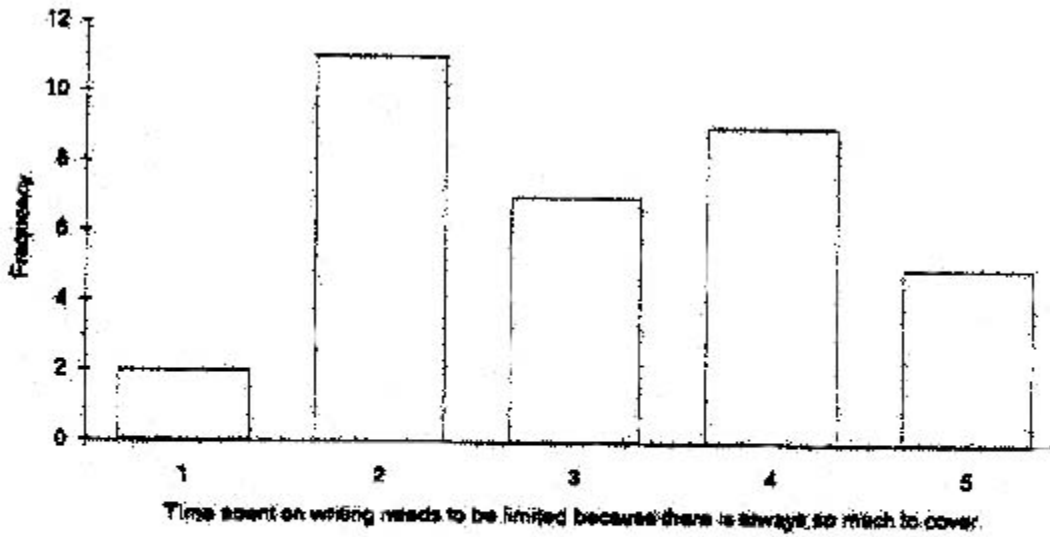




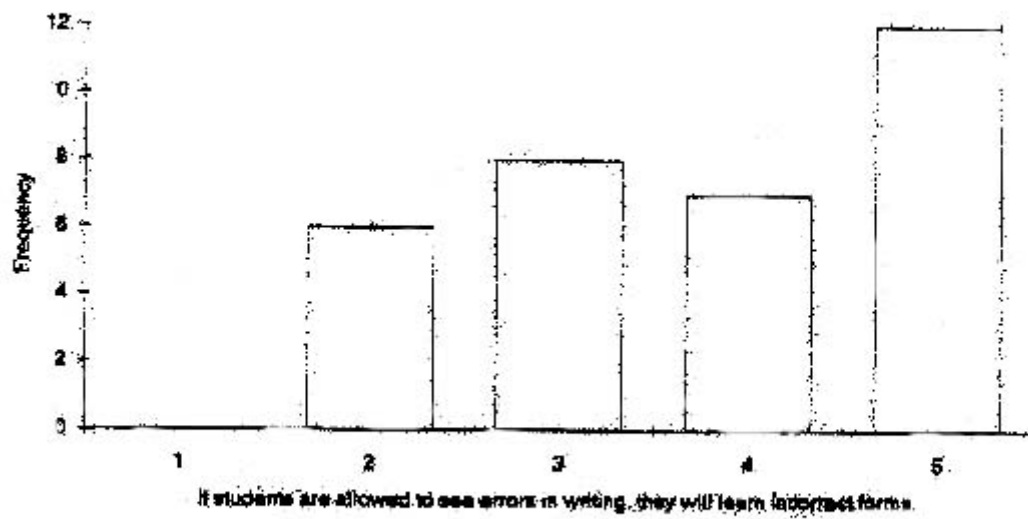
Bar Chart for Question 27



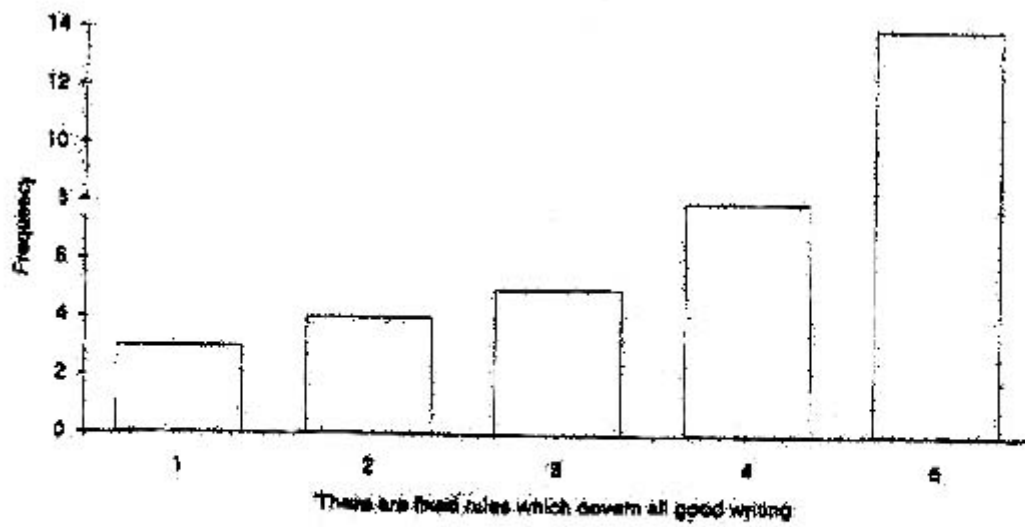
Bar Chart for Question 28



Bar Chart for Question 28



Bar Chart for Question 30



**APPENDIX D**  
**LANGUAGE TEACHERS'**  
**FEEDBACK FORM**

### Language Teacher's Feedback

Dates:  
Name  
Course:

Writing Activity: (brief description)

Type of approach:     Controlled Composition     Current traditional rhetoric  
                           Process Approach         Writing for Academic Purposes

Time spent on preparation \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Response and / or Evaluation:

Time spent on Evaluation \_\_\_\_\_

Effectiveness of Assignment. Were there any problems?

Would you recommend this activity?

.....  
Writing Activity: (brief description)

Type of approach:     Controlled Composition     Current traditional rhetoric  
                           Process Approach         Writing for Academic Purposes

Time spent on preparation \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Response and / or Evaluation:

Time spent on Evaluation \_\_\_\_\_

Effectiveness of Assignment. Were there any problems?

Would you recommend this activity?

**APPENDIX E**  
**STUDENT SURVEY FORM**

**Student Survey**  
**Using Intensive Writing-to-Learn Activities**  
**in the Foreign Language Classroom**

Please complete the following survey. Do not sign your name on this sheet. The information you include will help us to refine the writing component for future classes.

Course number:

Course instructor:

1. Circle **all** the types of writing you did for this class:
- |                       |               |                        |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| fill-in-the-blank     | brainstorming | clustering             | freewriting         |
| letters               | essays        | peer editing responses |                     |
| rough drafts          | listing       | revision drafts        | finished drafts     |
| sentence translations |               | descriptions           | narratives(stories) |
| argumentation         | reviews       | advertising            |                     |
- Other types of writing:

2. Which types of writing did you find the most helpful in terms of learning a language?
3. Which types of writing did you find the least helpful in terms of learning a language?
4. How often did you use writing activities per week (either in-class or as homework)?  
 less than once a week   once a week   three times a week   more than three times a week
5. Have you done more writing in this course than you have in previous language classes?
6. Have you done more writing in this course than you have in other courses (other than language courses)?
7. Does your instructor correct your homework for grammatical errors:  
 rarely   seldom   some of the time   often   most of the time
8. Do you expect/want grammatical errors on written assignments "to be corrected?"

9. What do you do with homework that is returned to you?
  
10. Do you think that the writing that you did for this course improved your language acquisition skills?  
not at all      slightly      moderately      considerably      a great deal
  
11. Did the amount of writing--in relation to the amount of speaking, listening, and reading--seem appropriate to the course?
  
  
12. Has your writing--either in your second language or your first language-- improved this quarter? How? In what way?
  
  
13. Are you familiar with the process approach to writing from other courses, either at the University or high school?
  
  
14. Do you see any relationship between the writing that you did for this course and the writing that you do for other courses? Do you use what you have learned in this course when writing for other courses and vice-versa?
  
  
15. Did the writing activities make the class more enjoyable/relevant? In what way?
  
  
16. In general do you like learning second languages?
  
  
17. Why did you take this course?

Please feel free to add other comments in the space provided below: